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T R A G E D Y.

by William Hodson

*Qui non moderabitur iræ,
Infectum volet esse, dolor quod suaserit, et mens,
Dum pœnas odio per vim festinat inulto.*

HOR.

L O N D O N :

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P R E F A C E.

THE Tragedy here offered to the Public, is founded on the Ezio of Metastasio; as every one, conversant with the writings of that favourite Italian poet, will, on a comparison, without difficulty perceive. But the Author of it trusts, he shall be justified in asserting, that it has no more, than its foundation on that Opera, since but a small number of scenes are borrowed from thence in the whole piece; of the greater part of which a portion only has been employ'd, and even that portion very much altered.

To decry this method, of raising the fabric of a play upon a borrowed foundation, is the favorite language, and humour of the times; although to fit an Italian Opera for the English Stage, requires scarce less labour, less addition, or less correction, than the same story would have demanded, if told in the simple language of history,

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or the affected stile of romance : Yet from these fountains did the immortal Shakespear himself borrow most of his plots, and the custom has without censure been uniformly practised by all writers for the Stage from him, down to the present period. But those, who would wish to see all objections, and arguments of this kind satisfactorily answered, need only consult Dryden's preface to his *Mock Astrologer* : Or, if they are not willing to abide by the testimony of so excellent a judge, (because he is an Englishman, and a party in the cause for which he pleads,) let them be determined by an ancient, the Coryphæus of critics, and one who cannot be prejudiced in favor of the cause he espouses ; I mean Longinus, who, in that section of his treatise, where he is discoursing of imitation, after instructing us, that Plato has opened a new road to the sublime, if we will but follow his footsteps, namely, an imitation of those illustrious poets, and orators, who have written before us ; after informing us also, that this philosopher was the greatest imitator of Homer, that ever existed, having enriched his works with innumerable rills drawn from that poet,

as

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as from a living fountain; he goes on to tell us, “ that we ought not to account an imitation a plagiarism, but rather a beautiful idea of him, who imitates, forming himself upon the invention, and works of another, and entering the lists, like a youthful champion, to dispute the prize with the former victor.*

It may perhaps be objected to the following production, that it is made, without necessity, to end unhappily, but if Aristotle is right, when he asserts, that terror, and pity, are the leading passions, which Tragedy should endeavour to excite; those which end unfortunately, must surely be allowed to give those passions far the greater scope. If it be true also, that it is the office of the Drama to hold up a faithful mirror of human life; those Tragedies, which end happily, cannot, I am afraid, boast of exhibiting a more real, though a more pleasing picture of it, than those, which are conducted in a
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* Ἐστὶ δ' ὅς ἐστι κλοπὴ τὸ πρᾶγμα, ἀλλ' (ὡς ἀπὸ καλῶν ἡθῶν) ἡ πλάσματων, ἢ δημιουργημάτων ἀπολύτως. Καὶ ὅς ἂν ἐπαινεῖται μοι δοκῇ τηλικαῦτά τινα τοῖς τῆς φιλοσοφίας δόγμασι, ὡς οἱ ποιητικῆς ἑλπίς πολλαχῶς συνιέναι καὶ φράσεις, εἰ μὴ περὶ πρωταίων, καὶ Διὸς, πάντῃ θυμῷ, πρὸς Ὅμηρον, (ὡς ἀνταγωνιστὰς νόος, πρὸς ἡδὴ γεθαυμασμένοι,) δ' ἠρισμένον.

contrary manner ; since the history of mankind is little more than the narration of events, which have been attended with a similar catastrophe. But the Author had a still farther intention in making the present performance one of the latter kind, as he meant to inculcate by a double moral not only the criminality of revenge, but the impropriety of that sentiment, which, falsely, concludes that all virtue must receive its retribution in this life. How far probability has been violated, or preserved in the conduct of the piece, is, with all deference, submitted to the public judgment.

I have endeavoured, according to the extent of my abilities, to pay particular attention to the harmony of the metre in the following Tragedy. The structure of our blank verse seems to me a thing of more art, than is generally imagined, and less attended to, than its consequence deserves ; since it is well known, what dignity, and elegance, a nervous, graceful versification, will give to the most simple, unlaboured language ; in-
somuch, that even those, who are best acquainted with the fascinating powers of poetic diction, are sometimes astonished to
find

find, what a different impressi^{on} the very same sentiment makes on the heart, when rolling in all the majesty of numbers, perfect, copious, and harmonious, which satisfy at once, and charm the ear, or limping in ill-turn'd periods, and defective measures. Having bestowed some consideration on this subject, I am willing to flatter myself, that the observations I have made, may possibly tend to the farther perfection of this kind of verse, and am therefore tempted to offer them to the public; but this I profess to do with becoming diffidence, and a perfect willingness to retract my error, if I am found to be mistaken.

As the rhythmus of the Grecian, and Roman verse, was determined by the quantity of the syllables only, without any regard to the accent; so the rhythmus of our verse is regulated, in direct opposition, by the accent only, without any regard to the quantity.*

As

* The ancient accent was only a variation (as is supposed) of the tone of the voice, and had no connexion with the quantity of the syllable. Our accent is always attended with an emphasis, which makes the syllable so accented long, while those, which pass off the tongue without any emphasis, are short.

As the length, or brevity, of all our syllables therefore is determined by the accent, it should be laid down as a fundamental rule, "That no word ought, merely in favour of the metre, to be strain'd, or forcibly pronounc'd with an accent different from its fix'd and accustomed one, as is done in the following verse :

To mēet thē foē of mānkīnd in his walk.

Venice Preserv'd, A& II.

Since, if this is allowed, our language will have no standard; but poets will be at liberty to alter the accents of words, as their own advantage, or caprice, may direct." *

This being granted, it follows, that to give our narrative iambic verse of five feet, (each of which consists of a short, and a long syllable) its perfect rhythmus, the second, fourth, sixth, eighth, and tenth syllables, ought

* In words of doubtful accent, it is true, poets are left at their liberty, and, occasionally, syllables, which in ordinary conversation are pass'd over unaccented, and are consequently short, are read in verse with an emphasis, which gives them the time of long ones. But this cannot be frequently done; most of our short syllables and particularly our monosyllabic particles, cannot without violence, and offence to the ear, be made to do the duty of long syllables.

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ought to be capable, without any uncommon accent being laid upon the words, to be pronounced with such a degree of emphasis, as shall justly entitle them to be call'd long ones. If the emphasis therefore be remov'd from these syllables to the others, it is plain the measure of the verse must be disturbed, and the more disturbed, the more it is removed.

It is from hence a consequence, that, if a trochaic foot (which consists of a long and a short syllable) be introduced into any iambic verse, it will of course cause the accent to be so removed, and render the verse imperfect.

However, the nearer any imperfection is to the beginning of the verse, the less, in general, is it perceptible; and therefore a verse may begin with a trochaic foot, without any offence to the ear, though such a verse be really imperfect, as the following :

Bow like a slave before him, wait his pleasure.

Ambitious Step-mother, Act IV.

But it is customary with our writers of Tragedy, to introduce a trochaic foot into

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the

P R E F A C E.

the middle of the verse, which is a liberty our iambic measures seem to me scarcely to admit of; such verses being in effect the beginning of two unfinish'd iambics, rather than one continued whole one, as will appear from the following examples :

The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheek. Stōp thēm Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death.

All for Love, Act I.

A wrong like this will make me ev'n forget
The weakness of my sex : oh for a sword !

Fair Penitent, Act III.

Which should be read, and we in effect do read them, thus :

The big round drops course one another down
The furrows of his cheek.
Stop them, Ventidius,
Or I shall blush to death.——

A wrong like this will make me ev'n forget
The weakness of my sex.
Oh for a sword——

And Dryden himself seems to have been of this opinion, since he has publish'd some of his speeches in this very manner, as for instance :

Art

P R E F A C E. xi

Art thou return'd at last, my better half?
 Come, give me all myself.
 Let me not live,
 If the young bridegroom, longing for the night
 Was ever half so fond.

All for Love, Act III.

The liberty of placing a trochaic foot after the first, is still less allowable, when the supernumerary syllables, common to all tragic writers at the end of the verse, is made to fall somewhere during the progress of it. Such measures will by no means read, when considered as one verse, but necessarily divide themselves into two incomplete ones, as in the following example :

Bless'd to my wish, I was the prince Moneses;
 Börn, | | | | | | |
 and bred up to greatness. Witnëss the blood—
Tamerlane, Act I.

Which must be, and always is read, thus :

Bless'd to my wish, I was the prince Moneses;
 Born, and bred up to greatness.
 Witnëss the blood—

In like manner this,

The hero's race disclaims thee. Why dost thou frown,
 And knit thy boyish brow?
Ambitious Step-mother, Act II.

Is read,

The hero's race disclaims thee.
 Why dost thou frown, and knit thy boyish brow?

xii P R E F A C E.

This licence is ofteneft usurped at the joining two speeches ; but does not lefs offend the eye, and ear, there, than in any other place, as for example :

B A J A Z E T.

—Now thou know'ft my mind,

And question me no farther.

T A M E R L A N E.

Well doft thou teach me.

Tamerlane, A& II.

Which are clearly the first part of two incomplete verses, and not one whole one.

If any other foot than the iambic, and trochaic, is introduced into the verse, as the pyrrhic (consisting of two short syllables) the spondaic (of two long) the anapestic (of two short and one long) or the dactylic (of one long and two short) the verse will generally be more defective, and often will not read at all.

As in these examples, where two iambics are changed into a pyrrhic, and spondaic :

Since kings who are call'd gods prophane themselves.

Tamerlane, A& I,

To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.

Venice Preserv'd, A& II,

In

P R E F A C E. xiii

In this, where three iambics are changed into two anapests, and the fourth foot is a trochaic,

I have done | as I ought. | Virtue still does—

Tamerlane, Act II.

In this, where the three first iambics are changed into two dactyles, and the two last into a pyrrhic, and trochaic,

This was the | recompense | of my service.

Venice Preserv'd, Act I.

In this, which contains both anapest, and dactyle,

We cannot conquer like thee; | yet we can die for thee.

Ulysses, Act V.

In this, which consists totally of dactylic feet,

Lament's, and | leprosy, | blindness, and | lunacy.

Orphan, Act IV.

And in this, in which the dactylic, anapestic, and trochaic feet are all united.

Kneel to him, | take him by the hand, | speak to him.

All for Love, Act III.

There is indeed one case, in which, it is, on all sides, held proper to break the measure of the verse, though it become defective thereby, nay that very defect becomes a beauty, even that beauty for which Virgil is

xiv P R E F A C E.

so often, and so justly admired, of making the rhythmus, and sound of the verse enforce, and become an echo to the sentiment. As in this verse of Milton,

And towārd the gāte rōlling hēr bēstīal trāin.

Paradise Lost, b. II.

where a trochaic foot is interposed in the middle of the verse, which might be easily rendered perfect, thus :

And rōlling towārd the gāte hēr bēstīal trāin.

but then much of the effect, and energy of the verse, produced by the emphasis on the word *rolling*, which almost renders the object described present to the imagination, would vanish. However, it is certain, that if the measure was never broken into, but upon such occasions as these, this beauty would be much more remarkable,

Although a verse, which begins with a trochaic foot, is, in reality, imperfect, yet (as was remarked) on account of the emphasis, which it conveys, it does not offend the ear. But it is very different when the first foot is a pyrrhic, with which therefore a verse should never be suffered to begin; for if the
second

second foot be iambic, as it ought to be, the verse (unless contrary to the fundamental rule laid down, we force an accent, where there naturally is none) will begin with three short syllables, and of course must be feeble, and leave the ear unsatisfied.

As in these examples :

With a malignant joy she views my ruin.

Tamerlane, Act II.

—If they see a man

How will they turn together all, and gaze

Upon the monster.

Orphan; Act V.

This last example would surely have read much better had it been expressed thus :

—How will they turn together all,

And gaze upon the monster—

As there is always a pause at the end of every verse, though momentaneous, and perhaps almost imperceptible; any two verses, of which one ends, and the other begins with words, which are so connected, as not to bear even the idea of a pause between them, must be imperfect. Such verses also have a prosaic appearance, inasmuch as they seem to conclude

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clude exactly like prosaic lines, without any regard to metre. As in the following instances :

——I have never us'd

My soldiers to demand a reason of

My actions.

All for Love, Act I.

The gentle goddess nature wisely has

Allotted——

Ambitious Step-mother, Act III.

Where, *of*, which is only the preposition marking the case of the substantive (actions,) cannot, even in idea, be separated from it.—Nor can any more the auxiliary verb, *has*, be separated from its participle, (allotted.) Such instances therefore would surely have been better written—

I have never us'd

My soldiers to demand

A reason of my actions.

The gentle goddess nature wisely has allotted—

The lengthening of words, which are, in pronunciation, only of one syllable, into two, such as heav'n, pow'r, &c. merely to make up the measure, as is sometimes done, renders the verse scarce less feeble, than those unnecessary expletives, which Pope has criticized; as in this instance :

I loath,

P R E F A C E. xvii

I loath, and scorn that fool, thou mean'st, as much,
Or more, than thou canst; but the beast has gold.
That makes him necessary, *power* too
To qualify my character——

Venice Preserv'd, Act II.

That too many consecutive vowels, without
elisions, and also too many elisions, as in the
following examples :

Nor shalt thou lose
The glorious portion, which thy fate designs thee,
For thy Amestris' fears.

Ambitious Step-mother, Act I.

Priests make a trade on't, and yet starve by't too.

Venice Preserv'd, Act II.

tend very much to disturb the harmony of
the verse, and render it harsh, I need scarce
observe; since they have been censured an-
ciently, by such authors as Cicero, and Quin-
tilian, and in later times by Pope.

As a verse should never be allowed to
begin with a pyrrhic foot, so no verse, of only
five feet, should be allowed to end with one;
it renders the verse enervate, and inhar-
monious, and that for this reason, it wants
its due measure, the last two short syllables,
being

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being equivalent in time, to one long one only, as in this verse :

While frōm his loōks ās frōm dīvīnītŷ.

Tamerlane, A&t II.

Where, besides the imperfection arising from the interposition of the trochaic foot, in the middle of the verse, the two last syllables of the word (*divinity*,) being short, the verse, in fact, consists of no more than four feet, and a long syllable. So also this example :

—You then perhaps may sigh,
And muster all your Roman gravity.—

All for Love, A&t II.

I am aware it may be objected here, that the last syllable of every verse is common, and therefore the verse is complete; but though this may be a valid argument in regard to Latin verse, where the rhythmus is determin'd by quantity, it will not hold good in our English verse, where accent governs all, and where, for want of this accent, the ear will infallibly be disappointed. The pyrrhic foot therefore, I think, should not be allow'd to end a verse of five feet, but be reserv'd for those, which are lengthen'd to six,

P R E F A C E. xix

fix, where indeed it is used with the greatest propriety, as in the following instances :

—Let mankind,
Adore in him your visible divinity.
Ambitious Step-mother, A& I.

I am myself the guardian of my honour,
And will not brook so insolent a monitor.
Fair Penitent, A& III.

Where the two last syllables, in the word, *monitor*, are but little more than equivalent to the redundant syllable, in the verse before, and therefore such verses, if used sparingly, and with discretion, agreeably vary it.

A verse of five feet ought not only to end with the stable syllable of the iambic foot, but that syllable ought never to be allow'd to be an insignificant monosyllabic particle, (though, generally speaking, words of that kind cannot be employ'd as long syllables, without laying a false accent on them) for such never fail to render the verse remarkably weak, and prosaic, as in this instance :

Ungentle hate, and brawling rage, shall *not*
Disturb the peace——
Ambitious Step-mother, A& III.

Yet, when the verse is lengthen'd to six feet, this is allow'd, because the verse having already its due measure without it, the super-numerary syllables pass unregarded. As in this example :

Say thou, to whom this paradise is known,
Where lies the blisful region. *Mark my way to it.*
Fair Penitent, A& III.

As a pyrrhic foot should be allow'd to end no verse but one of six feet, so, vice versa, no verse should be allow'd to be lengthened to six feet unless it end with a pyrrhic foot, and that for this reason, because such verses, and such only, scarce exceed the regular verse of five feet, with its redundant syllable.

If this principle be true, all verses of six feet, ending with one iambic foot, should be disallow'd, such as the following :

'Tis fruitless to complain, haste to the court,
Improve your interest there for pardon from the queen.
Spanish Fryar, A& I.

We've neither safety, unity, nor peace, my friend.
Venice Preserv'd, A& I.

Unless perhaps such a verse may be allow'd to close a scene, or an act, like an alexandrine rhyme.

It

P R E F A C E. xxi

It follows from what has been said, *a fortiori*, that all verses of more than six feet, should by no means be used, with whatever feet they end; such as the following, which consist of six feet, and the redundant syllable:

If one cold look, one angry word had told me,
That thou wert chang'd, and I was grown a burden to thee.
Ulysses, Act IV.

And still less these of seven feet:

That were a wish too mighty for her hopes,
Too presuming for her low fortune, and your ebbing love.
All for Love, Act II.

— I scorn to flatter
A blown-up fool above me, to crush the wretch beneath me.
Venice Preserv'd, Act I.

And be what my Ulysses was, my best, my greatest lord.
Ulysses, Act I.

Somewhere too, in Rowe, I remember I have read a verse which consisted of seven feet, and the redundant syllable, though my memory does not serve to quote the place.

If it is incongruous to the genius of our iambic verse, thus to extend it beyond its due length, it is no less so to leave it incomplete, as in these examples :

I will

I will be justified in all I do,
 To late posterity, and therefore hear me.
 If I mix a lye
 With any truth, reproach me freely with it.
 All for Love, Act II.

—So indeed men think me,
 But they're mistaken, Jaffier, I'm a rogue,
 As well as they,
 A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain as thou seest me.
 Venice Preserv'd, Act I.

If we allow ourselves such liberties
 these, our iambic blank verse will have no
 standard, but may be indefinitely extended,
 at pleasure, from one foot, to nine.

I am not ignorant it may, and perhaps will
 be urged, that all the irregularities here taken
 notice of, are made use of by poets, to intro-
 duce a greater variety into their verse, to
 prevent its satiating the ear, and render it
 more an imitation of discourse. But this is
 precisely what the dramatic writers of Rome
 had urged in defence of themselves, for the
 use of exactly similar licences, when Tully
 told them, that by endeavouring to make
 their verse too much resemble conversation,
 they had reduced it to be little, or nothing
 different.

different from prose. * Nor indeed does an irregular continuation of feet, seem at all necessary, to produce all the variety which is required in the longest tragedy. Let the following verses of Dryden, and Glover, wherein the above rules are observed, be considered, and then let the reader's ear judge, whether a whole tragedy written in numbers, at once so harmonious, and so varied, would satiate the ear.

—She came from Egypt.

Her Galley down the silver Cydnos row'd,
The tackling silk, the streamers wav'd with gold,
The gentle winds were lodg'd in purple sails,
The nymphs, like Nereids, round her couch were plac'd,
Where, she, another sea-born Venus, lay.
She lay, and lean'd her cheek upon her hand,
And cast a look so languishingly sweet,

As

* *Esse igitur in oratione numerum quendam, non est difficile cognoscere. Sed in versibus res est apertior; quanquam etiam á modis quibusdam, cantu remoto, soluta esse videatur oratio, maximèque id in optimo quoque eorum poetarum, qui lyrici á Græcis nominantur, quos, cum cantu spoliaveris, nuda pene remanet oratio. Quorum similia sunt quædam etiam apud nostros; velut ille in Thyeste--Quemnam te esse dicam? qui tardâ in senectute--et quæ sequuntur, quæ, nisi cum tibicen accessit, orationi sunt solutæ similissima. At comicorum senarii propter similitudinem sermonis sic sæpe sunt abjecti, ut non nunquam vix in his numerus, et versus intelligi possit,*

Ciceronis Orator.

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As if, secure of all beholders hearts,
Neglecting she could take them. Boys, like Cupids,
Stood fanning, with their painted wings, the winds
That play'd about her face ; but if she smil'd,
A darting glory seem'd to blaze abroad,
That mens desiring eyes were never wearied,
But hung upon the object. To soft flutes
The silver oars kept time, and while they play'd,
The hearing gave new pleasure to the sight,
And both to thought. 'Twas Heav'n, or something more ;
For so she charm'd all hearts, that gazing crowds
Stood panting on the shore, and wanted breath
To give their welcome voice.

All for Love, Act III.

Look down, connubial goddess ! and with hope
Let thy appeas'd divinity indulge
A hero off'ring at thy holy shrine,
His spirit humbled with repentant sighs.
You too attend, ye favourable gales,
And swiftly waft us to the kind embrace
Of our companion Orpheus, who shall breathe
His tuneful consolation in a strain
Of grief-composing energy, to charm
Distraction's rage, 'till new-born reason smile.
Then with her children, lovely as their mother,
Shall blooming Tempé on its flow'ry lap
Again receive her, while Penéus' stream
Blends with the sitting warblers on his banks,
His murm'ring cadence to delight her ear ;
And I once more, along th' accustomed vale,
Shall, by the lustre of the silent moon,
Walk by her side attentive, while her tongue

Unfolds

P R E F A C E. xxv

Unfolds the pow'rs of heav'n's resplendent train,
Of magic numbers, and mysterious spells,
And feasts with knowledge my enraptur'd soul.

Medea, Act IV.

In effect the redundant syllable, the incessant change of the pause, or Cæsura, (now falling at the end of one foot, now of another, and now on the syllable beyond the foot, with an ever-varying succession) the division of the verses, after different manners, by the formation of the sentences, the continuation of the same sentence, and even the same part of a sentence, from one verse to another, seem abundantly sufficient to avoid any appearance of sameness, and prevent any satiety arising from the perfection of the metre. It is in these particulars that the superiority of blank verse over rhyme, and its peculiar aptitude for long works, as being infinitely less cloying to the ears, principally consists. For in all the best rhyme (in Pope's, for instance) to say nothing of the jingle, the sense almost constantly closes with the couplet, or triplet at most, and the pause is, for very many lines together, exactly in the same place. Nay, so essential is the sameness of the pause, and the conclusion,

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fion of the sense with the rhyme, to this kind of verse, that if the sentiment be extended thro' many lines, and the pause much varied, we lose the idea of the rhyme, and read it as blank verse. This often happens in Churchill's compositions, as, for example, in the following lines among others, where, if the rhymes be taken away, and synonymous words put in their places, the measures will still be pleasing, which will hardly ever be the case where the sense ends with the rhyme, and therefore shews that the beauty of these verses does not depend upon the rhyme, but upon the construction of the sentence, and the measure.

And are there bards, who on creation's file
Stand rank'd as men, who breathe in this fair isle
The air of freedom, with so little gall,
So low a spirit, prostrate thus to fall
Before these idols, and without a groan
Bear wrongs, might call forth murmurs from a stone?
Better, and much more noble, to abjure
The sight of men, and in some cave, secure
From all the outrages of pride, to feast
On nature's fallads. Independence, p. 313.

It may also possibly be objected to the foregoing observations, that all those irregularities of metre, which they regard as faulty,
are

P R E F A C E. xxvii

are to be found (as the examples produced testify) in Dryden, Otway, and Rowe; poets, whose abilities were such as demand our warmest admiration, who are universally esteemed great polishers of our language, and masters of versification. All this I readily acknowledge, since no man can have a higher opinion of their strength of genius, and talent for versification, than myself; I allow also, that energetic sentiment, and sublime imagery will always produce great effects, though the numbers in which they are conveyed be imperfect, and this is doubtless the reason why many passages in these authors are very justly held in high admiration, where the versification is lame and imperfect. Nay, so far am I from being one of those, whom Pope finely satirizes in the following lines:

But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth, or rough, with them, is right or wrong:
In the bright muse tho' thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus but to please the ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.

}

Essay on Criticism.

xxviii P R E F A C E.

That I think one sterling sentiment, or image, though conveyed in measures the most defective, is worth all the poetry that ever was written, whose sole excellence lies in its expression, and metre. But the perfection of good writing seems to consist in a union of both; a combination of sense and harmony, where, like springs, which mutually sustain and actuate each other, the sublimity of the thought supports the dignity of the numbers, and the beauty of the measures reflects new grace and energy on the sentiment. I beg leave to observe farther also, that the very reason (at least as it appears to me) why the numbers of Dryden, Otway, and Rowe, are more mellifluous, and majestic, than those of most other authors, is, because their verse agrees more with the above observations, than that of most other writers for the stage; and it surely can be no disparagement to their abilities, that, in the early period in which they wrote, our verse had not attained all the perfection of which it is capable, but rather an honourable testimony of their extent; since, though their numbers are unequal, they have never been surpassed either in dignity, or grace.

In

P R E F A C E. xxix

In a word, to give our iambic narrative verse for the stage, its utmost harmony, and strength, these rules (at least as far as my ear, and judgment, inform me) should be observed.

1. No verse should be of less extent than five feet, and therefore none left incomplete.

2. No verse of five feet, should begin, or end, with a pyrrhic foot.

3 No trochaic foot should be allowed after the first, but all the rest be pure iambics, except only, when the measure is broken, to give new force to the sentiment.

4. No words, which will not bear a division, should be separated into two verses—no insignificant monosyllabic particle should conclude a verse of five feet—and no words which are generally pronounced in one syllable, should be expanded into two, to fill up the measure.

5. No verse should be allowed to be lengthened to six feet, unless it conclude with a pyrrhic foot.

6. No

xxx P R E F A C E.

6. No verse of more than six feet should be admitted, conclude with what foot it may.

7. The redundant syllable should be used as much as possible, because it is the best means of giving that easy freedom to the verse, so extremely proper for dialogue.

8. The pause should be incessantly varied, and made, as much as possible, to fall on the syllable after the conclusion of that foot on which it is made, * as such pauses give a remarkable smoothness and flow to the verse.

These are some of the precepts, which, from the perusal of our best dramatic writers, I have formed to myself on the subject of
our

* As in this line of Dryden, before mentioned, where it is in the syllable beyond the the third foot,

“Neglecting she could take them. Boys, like Cupids,”

And this of Glover, where it is on the syllable beyond the second,

“Then with her children, lovely as the mother.”

P R E F A C E. xxxi

our narrative iambic verse. † My ear, and judgment, may very possibly deceive me, but I cannot help thinking, at present, that their observation will tend to the perfection of this kind of metre, rend'ring it, at the same time, more nervous, and melodious. By these, at least, I have endeavoured to form the numbers of the following performance, though it will very possibly be found on examination, that I have (unintentionally) transgressed them.

It may be proper to take notice, before I put an end to this preface, that the present Tragedy was, some years ago, offered to Mr. Colman (different indeed in some measure from its present state, as it has since received considerable alterations) but for want of merit, or interest, or both, was rejected; nor is it now by any means published, as meant to appeal from that gentleman's judgment. It is well known, there
are

† I hope it will not be objected to me that they carry too much the appearance, and parade of pedantry, and art, when it is remembered, that Pope has said,

“ True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,
As those move easiest, who have learn'd to dance.”

Essay on Criticism.

xxxii P R E F A C E.

are many reasons, and those far from discreditable ones (such as private friendship, urgent sollicitation, &c.) which may induce a manager, since he can present but a certain number, to receive one piece, and refuse another, even supposing, what the rejected author has no right to suppose without good evidence, the discarded piece to be of equal merit with the accepted one, though it may not be without its share. Conscious of this, and aware (as every one in the least conversant with the theatres must be) what almost insuperable difficulties a writer, whose reputation is not established, has to surmount, before his piece can make its way to the stage; the Author of the following work, never offered it to any other manager, as he has not the pleasure of their acquaintance, though he professes due respect for their abilities, but rather chose to give it this way to the public, than trust the chance of a second repulse.

This he thought necessary to observe, in order to account for the rather unusual method of publishing a performance of this kind, which has not been honoured with
the

P R E F A C E. xxxiii

the signet of public approbation. Should there be found in it any thing worthy of notice, the impartial reader will not reprobate it, for not having issued from the penetralia of the Theatre; should there not, he will let it quietly depart to its humble, but merited destination,

In vicum, vendentem thus, et odores,

Dramatis

[illegible]

1. The first of these is the fact that the

Dramatis Personæ.

M E N.

PHARASMANES, King of Persia, in love with Semira.

ARSACES, General to Pharasmanes, in love with,
and betroth'd to Semira.

MITHRINES, Father to Semira.

MIRVAN, Captain of Pharasmanes' Guard.

W O M E N.

ARIANA, Sister of Pharasmanes, privately in love
with Arsaces.

SEMIRA, in love with, and betroth'd to Arsaces.

DARAXA, and Maidens, Attendants on Ariana.

PANTHEA, Confidante of Semira.

Officers, Guards, Persians, &c.

S C E N E, S U S A.

The Reader is desired to excuse the following Errata, as also
a few other literal ones, occasion'd by the Author's
distance from the Press.

P R E F A C E.

Page 20. l. 15. *For one* *read* an.
23. l. 2. --- continuation --- combination.
P L A Y.
6. l. 23. --- resolution --- revolution.
19. l. 12. --- where winds, --- when winds,
30. l. 11. --- fallen --- falling.
79. l. 3. --- heart --- hand.



A R S A C E S:

A T R A G E D Y.

A C T I. S C E N E I.

A retir'd Part of the Gardens of the Palace.

Enter MITHRINES and MIRVAN.

M I R V A N.

HEAR me, Mithrines, by our friendship, hear me!
Nor thus incessant brood upon your sorrows.

M I T H R I N E S.

My lost Aspasia! my lamented wife!
Ill had Mithrines merited thy love,
Could he support thy fortune unrepining.
Adieu, my faithful, ever honor'd comfort!
Each Persian dame, thy fortitude admiring,
In hymns of praise, shall celebrate thy virtue,
While at thy story to remotest periods—

M I R V A N.

Is this the firmness of a manly mind?
Thus to deplore th' inevitable lot
Mortality is heir to, and beneath

B

That

A R S A C E S.

That universal destiny, despond,
To which all human happiness is subject,
Betrays a weakness ill becomes Mithrines.

M I T H R I N E S.

Oh, had she sunk to death's dark shades in peace!
I would have borne my sorrows like a Persian.
But sad remembrance of her flagrant wrongs
Unmans my heart. Upbraid me not, dear spirit!
That yet I linger, nor avenge the outrage
Thy spotless virtue suffer'd. Brutal tyrant!
But thou shalt feel me—

M I R V A N.

Like yourself, I hate

This Pharasmanes; nor ought doubts my mind,
Tho' unacquainted with the mournful secret,
But that his lawless insolence of pow'r,
And wanton lust, some infamous affront
Have offer'd to Aspasia.

M I T H R I N E S.

Oh, my friend!

Shall I confess it? Justly thy suspicion
Divines the fatal secret.

M I R V A N.

Well I know,

Not pride itself with ampler sway controls
His savage spirit, than lascivious passions;
And once those passions, by the sun of beauty,
Enkindled in his bosom, of a king's
High duties careless, spurning every tie
Of gratitude, or amity, he braves
The blackest crimes, to gain the tempting prize.
Somewhat, indeed, in whispers I have heard,
But indistinct, for dread of his resentment,

Whose

A R S A C E S.

Whose jealous fury no compassion knows,
Wresting to treason every word, which seems,
Tho' but obliquely, to arraign his conduct,
Has seal'd the lips of every timid Persian;
Nor from yourself, unwilling to encrease
The poignant grief which rankles in your bosom,
Since your return to Pharasmanes' court,
The sad recital have I once requested.

M I T H R I N E S.

Now list thee then attentive, and my lips,
If indignation stifle not my voice,
Shall to thy friendly, sympathizing ear,
Recount a tale, will strike thee with amazement,
His golden zone scarce Mithra half has compass'd
(What time Arsaces march'd from Susa's gates
To meet this Scythian Osiroë in Battle,
And I was absent, as thou know'st, by arms
Reducing to their forfeited allegiance
A rebel province) since this Pharasmanes,
May Arimanius blast him! while the chace
Too close he follow'd, parted from his train,
Chanc'd, as he wander'd, to approach my castle,
Whose site thou know'st—

M I R V A N.

Not distant far from Susa;

I well remember on the plains it stands,
Where crown'd with lilies, and o'er-shading palms,
Which deck its borders, in transparent waves,
Choaspes rolls his fertilizing flood.

M I T H R I N E S.

Attended only by her female slaves,
Aspasia then resided at the mansion,
Awaiting my return. With due respect,
And modest affability of manners,

She entertained, in absence of her lord,
 Her regal Guest. But soon her sight inflam'd
 The wanton tyrant. Struck with her deportment,
 Fir'd by her beauty, the lascivious monster,
 Her ear profaning with his nauseous passion,
 In vain, by every artifice, attempted
 To win her to compliance with his will.
 But when he found intreaties all were fruitless,
 Nor promises, nor menaces, could make
 The virtuous matron quit the path of duty,
 Unmov'd by pray'rs, by imprecations, tears,
 And all the varied agonies of grief,
 Of hospitality regardless, deaf
 To every call of gratitude, or friendship,
 While I, far distant, loyal for his service
 Was braving peril, he by force attempted
 To violate her chastity, and load
 The man, whose name and family, has stood
 A guardian bulwark of his tott'ring throne,
 With foul dishonour.

M I R V A N.

Arbiters of justice !

Why sleep your lightnings, when such crimes defy
 Your everlasting vengeance ?

M I T H R I N E S.

But Aspasia,

With that heroic fortitude of soul,
 Became the noble consort of Mithrines ;
 By gentler means, despairing to preserve
 Inviolatè her honour, when she saw
 Persuasions ineffectual, unappall'd,
 Snatch'd from his side the dagger which he wore,
 And e'er his arm her purpose could prevent,

Deep

Deep in her bosom plunging it, beneath
 His feet, fell instant prostrate on the earth,
 Expiring with a groan. This tale of woe,
 Since my arrival, from a female slave,
 Who, aw'd by terror of the tyrant's wrath,
 The brutal outrage from a neighbouring chamber
 Saw, but presum'd not to assist her mistress,
 I learn'd in private.

M I R V A N.

Execrable ruffian!
 But where was then the beautiful Semira,
 Your virgin daughter by a former marriage?
 Her timely presence might have sav'd Aspasia.

M I T H R I N E S.

She then, perchance, was absent from the Castle,
 Or in the bloom of innocence and youth,
 My child, perhaps, a victim too had fall'n
 To lust, more savage than the mountain tyger,
 And aggravated obloquy had stain'd
 The honour of my house.

M I R V A N.

But say, Mithrines,
 Relate what follow'd this inhuman insult.
 How did th' assassin meet your injur'd presence?
 With all the pride of despotism inflated,
 Say did he brave his perpetrated crime?
 Or with the varnish of some specious tale,
 Detestably prevaricating, strive
 To gloss, and palliate, his atrocious guilt?

M I T H R I N E S.

Dreading the fury of my just resentment,
 In terror, lest my influence with the soldiers,
 Should stimulate the legions to revolt,

And

And join his rebel subjects to dethrone
 A monster, so abandon'd, e'er the tidings
 Had reach'd my ear, withdrawing my command,
 He call'd me back to Susa, on pretence
 Of needing my attendance near his person;
 And now attempts, beneath a load of honours,
 To bury the remembrance of my wrongs.
 But would he yield his empire to my rule,
 Not e'en that empire should procure his pardon,
 Or mollify my righteous indignation,
 Till in his heart my reeking steel has cancell'd
 Aspasia's suff'rings.—No, eternal Mithra!
 Here in thy presence, on his bended knee, *[kneeling,*
 Mithrines vows, his soul shall taste no pleasure,
 Till just revenge receive its consummation,

MIRVAN.

The gods themselves might leave their golden thrones,
 And Orosmades, join'd by Mithra, bare
 His red right arm, to aid a cause so righteous.
 Shall we, Oh shame! the sons of Persians, nurs'd
 In honourable freedom, we, Mithrines,
 Bow down our necks, and crouch beneath the yoke,
 Like timid, fawning slaves? Forbid it valor!
 Oh, would some glorious resolution offer,
 To crush the tyrant, and assert our rights,
 This hand should joyful join the sacred cause,
 And aid Mithrines to revenge Aspasia.

MITHRINES.

My heart acknowledges thy goodness, Mirvan,
 And grateful thanks thee for this proof of friendship.
 Oh, would Arfaces, would he meet our wishes!
 Then might we hurl the murd'rer from his throne,
 Might ignominious from his temples tear

Th'

A R S A C E S

Th' imperial diadem. But much I dread,
No cause so sacred can be found, to bend
His stern inflexibility of virtue!

M I R V A N.

In noble minds imperious honour rules
With unremitted empire. Yet the wrongs
Borne by the parent of his lov'd Semira,
Must rouse his wrath, and hurl it at the tyrant.

M I T H R I N E S.

On this I build my dearest expectation.
Grant, Orosmades, he may swift return,
Victorious from the field.

M I R V A N.

That pray'r is heard.
This morn arriv'd a courier, who reports
Barbarian Osröa, whose hardy legions
So long have ravag'd Persia unreveng'd,
And brav'd our arms, has fled before the hero.

M I T H R I N E S.

By heav'n, 'tis well! swift haste we then to learn
The welcome tidings. But be cautious, Mirvan,
Remember Pharasmanes is suspicious;
Nought but the firmest secrecy of conduct,
Can e'er mature our meditated vengeance,
Or shield ourselves from ruin. Then be guarded,
Nor let the smallest semblance of emotion,
The hidden purpose of your heart betray. [Exeunt.

S C E N E

1 A R S A C E S.

SCENE II. *A Chamber in the Palace.*

PHARASMANES *attended,* MITHRINES
and MIRVAN.

PHARASMANES.

Haste, and proclaim the tidings thro' our streets;
Bid all our subjects give a loose to rapture.
Thou, to our presence, introduce the Herald,
Who bears the tidings of a monarch's glory. [*Ex. Mir.*
This day brings more than conquest. Now, my friends,
'Tis now I reign, for Ofröa's defeat,
Has fixt my throne in safety.

Enter MIRVAN with an OFFICER.

Welcome, Soldier,

I see triumphant on thy brow the signet
Of victory impress'd. Your warlike leader
Has well sustain'd the fame of Pharasmanes.
But haste, unfold the wonders of the fight,
That to the story of his matchless deeds,
In that stern list magnanimous perform'd,
Where armies wither'd by the noxious glare
Flash'd from the eye-balls of war's giant demon,
To earth fell prostrate, my enamour'd ear
May bend complacent, and, with wrapt attention,
Hear the recital of his great achievements.

OFFICER.

At length, dread Sir, your arms are crown'd with con-
Again to Scythia, to his drear domain, [*quest.*
Barbarian Ofröa has fled defeated.
Ne'er did the eye of all pervading Mithra

More

A R S A C E S.

9

More hard fought field, more dreadful carnage view.
 Fell Arimanius thunder'd thro' the ranks,
 And by his side the fury Discord strode,
 In robes distilling blood. Long hover'd Victory
 With crimson wings around us, till Arfaces,
 Who, like a god, like Mithra's fulgent form,
 Thron'd on his blazing car, exalted rode,
 Amid the thickest of the adverse host
 His axle driving, with his own right hand,
 Mow'd down the foe. Such wond'rous valor rous'd
 Each Persian arm to fiercer deeds of prowess.
 With emulation every warrior press'd
 To gain the prize, disdaining to be conquer'd.
 Borne down resistless by th' impetuous shock,
 The proud barbarian fled the field in terror;
 And desolation cover'd with her pall,
 The scatter'd remnant of his routed host.

PHARASMANES.

Now, by the name of sovereign Oromades!
 The brave description sets my soul on fire.
 I thank ye, gods! Be such the fate of all
 Who dare dispute our empire. Say, where left you
 Th' heroic victor?

OFFICER.

But some few leagues distant,
 With all the splendid trophies of his conquest,
 Triumphant returning.

PHARASMANES.

'Tis enough.

Haste, in our name congratulate the chief;
 Bid him accelerate his march to Susa,
 Where Pharasmanes waits to deck his brow,
 With laurels worthy of his matchless merit. [*Ex. Officer.*

C

Thou,

Thou, Mirvan, see, with festive fillets bound,
 The sacred victim we to heav'n must offer,
 For such propitious fortune. [Exit *Mirvan*.

Rest, Mithrines,
 I have a secret asks your private audience.
 Approach, my friend, and give me patient hearing.
 Too well thou know'st—Oh! would I could conceal
 From thee, from Persia, from my own reflection,
 The fatal knowledge—but too well thou know'st
 Th' unhappy outrage, when, amid a whirlwind
 Of passions tost—fain, fain would I forget—
 Fain from thy breast obliterate every trace—
 Could I recal the moments which are past
 Again to being—but since that is hopeless,
 Tell me, Mithrines, is there no atonement—

MITHRINES.

No more, my lord, I penetrate your meaning :
 Let not my sov'reign dwell on the remembrance
 Of indiscretions past; nor apprehend
 Mithrines' soul still nourishes resentment,
 Or broods on wrongs, consign'd, with dead Aspasia,
 To everlasting rest. Can Pharasmanes
 Suspect Mithrines ever would indulge
 One thought subversive of that true allegiance,
 Those honours merit, his unask'd indulgence
 Has heap'd upon his servant?

PHARASMANES.

Yes, Mithrines,
 Thy observation cannot but have noted
 With what profusion of increasing favours,
 Show'r'd on thy head incessant, I have strove
 Th' indignity I offer'd to repay;
 And willing still to purchase thy forgiveness
 By nobler tribute, I have now resolv'd

With

With such an ample recompense to grace thee,
As suits the dignity of Pharasmanes.
Thou hast a daughter.

MITHRINES.

Ha! what means the tyrant? *(aside.*

PHARASMANES.

A daughter too, whose loveliness might warm
The frozen heart of age. Not youthful poets,
In all their glowing luxury of fancy,
Can paint the moiety of her perfections.
Her matchless beauty is above all praise,
And shall no longer unregarded bloom.
In retribution for th' unhappy wrong
I offer'd to the virtue of Aspasia,
The fair Semira shall partake my throne;
And thou, henceforward, be my more than father.
Haste then, Mithrines; haste, and let her know
The lord of Persia bows beneath her charms,
Impatient waiting till the holy rite
In nuptial bonds entwine our mutual hearts,
And every thought of injuries atton'd
Be buried in oblivion. *[Exit attended.*

MITHRINES.

Hence, thou tyrant!

And is it thus thy folly hopes to cancel
Thy scroll of guilt? thus vainly trusts to 'scape
My righteous vengeance? Glorious retribution!
Exalted recompense! Aspasia's murd'rer,
My daughter's lord! By everlasting Mithra,
These hands shall sooner in her blood be drench'd.

(after a pause.

But soft a moment—Grant she were his empress!
Then what occasions numberless would offer;

While unsuspecting, all his fears resign'd,
 The tyrant dreams of no conceal'd resentments,
 To strike th' avenging dagger to his heart,
 And gloriously retaliate on his head
 Aspasia's death—By heav'n it cannot fail!
 For this will rouse Arfaces' slumb'ring ire,
 And injur'd love will point the shafts of vengeance.
 Smile, Arimanius! to behold him work
 His own perdition, and forestal his ruin. [Exit.

S C E N E III.

A Chamber in MITHRINES' House.

Enter SEMIRA and PANTHEA.

SEMIRA.

Arfaces victor! Oh celestial sound!
 Sweeter than music to my ravish'd ears.
 And have the gods propitious heard my pray'rs?
 Has Orosmales twin'd the wreath of conquest,
 To grace my hero's temples? Bless'd event!
 But say, Panthea; to my list'ning ear
 Again repeat thy story, passing wonder.
 My doubting heart refuses to believe,
 A bliss so exquisite awaits Semira.
 Thou can'st not sure deceive—

PANTHEA.

My gracious mistress,
 Indulge no more these melancholy visions.
 The city rings with shouts of fervent joy.
 E'en while I speak, in all the pomp of triumph,
 He comes to lay his laurels at your feet.

SEMIRA.

S E M I R A.

Transporting thought! The champion of his country
 Comes to receive a nation's gratulations;
 A nation rescued by his arm from ruin.
 But what is all the current of their joy,
 With that vast tide of boundless love compar'd,
 Which overflows the bosom of Semira?
 Less than Choaspes with th' expanse of ocean.
 So should her raptures swell beyond their gladness;
 And yet, alas! my spirits droop unbidden:
 Something within me chills the rising transport,
 And dark presages harrow up my heart.

P A N T H E A.

Still will you dwell on visionary evils?
 When pleasure courts you to her fairy bow'r,
 When love and glory join to crown your wishes,
 Thus in their bud to crush the lovely blossoms,
 Betrays a timid, womanish despondence,
 Beneath Semira's spirit.

S E M I R A.

Oh, Panthea!

Fain would I quit these fearful apprehensions,
 And bid my soul indulge in brighter prospects;
 But vain my efforts; with redoubled force
 They rush upon me, seize my struggling heart,
 And will not be resisted. Yesternight,
 I shudder while I speak it, at that hour,
 That solemn hour, when restless spirits leave
 Untenanted their graves, with mournful aspect
 Aspasia drew my curtain: In her breast
 The fatal wound I saw, her own right hand
 In phrenzy had imprinted—With a look
 That pierc'd my heart, and froze my vital blood,

She

She bade me summon all my resolution,
 And prove myself her daughter. In amaze
 Entranc'd I lay; my tongue denied its office.
 At length recovering I enquir'd the secret
 In these fore-warnings wrapt; but, swift as thought,
 She instantaneous vanish'd from my sight,
 And the next moment offer'd to my view,
 My father, and my lover, dead before me.
 Trembling with horror, soon my piercing shrieks
 Awak'd me from my slumbers, when I found
 'Twas but a dream, if dream it might be nam'd,
 Which forc'd its image on my waking senses.

PANTHEA.

These are the coinings of creative fancy.
 Soon will Arsaces bless you with his presence,
 And from your bosom banish every fear.

S C E N E IV.

Enter MITHRINES.

MITHRINES.

Leave us, Panthea; matters of high import
 Require an instant audience of my daughter. [*Ex. Pan.*
 I have a secret to unfold, Semira,
 Will ask th' exertion of your utmost prudence.
 Tell me, should fortune destine you to empire,
 Would not the pomp and splendor of a throne,
 Have charms sufficient to engage your heart?

SEMIRA.

Ha! whence these questions? My prefaging mind!
 Say, whither do they lead?

MITHRINES.

M I T H R I N E S.

Our haughty monarch,
Th' enamour'd captive of Semira's beauty,
Has privately demanded my consent,
To make her partner of his bed and kingdom.

S E M I R A.

To Pharasmanes plighted ! Gracious heav'n !
Shall your Semira condescend to wed
Aspasia's cruel murd'rer ? Holy Mithra !
Shall the vain pomp of royalty have pow'r——

M I T H R I N E S.

Come to my arms, thou honour of my race ;
This glorious spirit well becomes my daughter.
Know then, Semira, I but feign'd compliance
To strike the surer blow. Do thou pursue
The means which fortune places in our reach ;
Consent, be his, then take an ample vengeance
For all the woes our dear Aspasia suffer'd,
And dash him headlong to the doleful realms,
Where Arimanius and his fiends inhabit.

S E M I R A.

Am I awake ? Dread ministers of heav'n !
Mithrines' child an infamous assassin !
The bare idea chills my soul with horror.
Oh hear me, Sir, my father, thrice rever'd :
If yet your daughter shares a parent's love,
If yet you value your unsullied fame,
Hear, hear your pleading child. Forego your purpose,
Nor thus reluctant urge her to the altar.
Think what keen anguish will o'erwhelm Arsaces,
And wait with patience his return to Susa.
This new attempt must wake his dread resentment,
Must urge him on to join your just revenge,
And from pollution save his lov'd Semira.

M I T H R I N E S.

MITHRINES.

Weep not, my daughter ; granted be your wish.
I would not force you to connubial bonds
Your soul abhors. Meantime guard well the secret
Within your heart impenetrably lock'd,
'Till Sufa greets th' heroic chief, whose arm
Has sav'd his country from impending ruin. [Exit.

SEMIRA.

It is as I suspected. Oh, Aspasia !
Prophetic were thy words. The gods are rous'd !
Some dreadful fate is lab'ring into birth.
But let it come, prepar'd I stand to suffer
Their awful pleasure. Yes, thou sacred shade !
Doubt not Semira will be found thy daughter.
While there are daggers, or swift-working poisons,
Nor racks, nor torments shall subdue my will,
Or make me vow affection to the tyrant. [Exit.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

A C T II. S C E N E I.

*The GARDENS of the PALACE.**Enter ARIANA, attended by DARAXA, and
her Maidens.*

A R I A N A.

N O more, Daraxa, this discourse offends me.
 I ask not of his triumph, that I know
 Will soon be spread thro' Persia's ample empire;
 'Tis of Arfaces, of himself, I ask.

D A R A X A.

My gracious Princess, moderate this fervor;
 This soft impatience will betray your secret.
 Already fame, in private whispers, blazons
 The love of Ariana for Arfaces;
 And this emotion, were it now discover'd,
 Would give a sanction to uprou'd suspicion.

A R I A N A.

Alas! how wretched is the lot of women!
 Should, unawares, our lips repeat a name,
 The murd'rous tongue of slander will pronounce
 Our hearts the victims of tyrannic passion.
 But say, Daraxa, how does Susa greet
 The welcome tidings? Thro' her ample bounds,
 Do not her sons, with swelling acclamation

D

Ring

Ring out the hero's unexampled deeds,
And everlasting fame?

D A R A X A.

Yes, gracious Princess,
His high achievements are the common theme;
All tongues with transport hang upon his name,
In rapturous peals of unaffected joy,
Hailing th' arrival of their guardian hero.

A R I A N A.

And well they may, for his unconquer'd arm
Has sav'd the realm from imminent perdition.
But yet, methinks, my boding mind could wish
Th' incautious people, with less ardent zeal,
Would pay their grateful homage to his virtues.
My brother is suspicious. His high spirit
Will bear no rival in his subjects favour.

(Trumpets at a distance.)

But hark!—these trumpets speak Arsaces near.
Haste thee, Daraxa, haste, and view the pageant;
For Pharismanes, of his triumph proud,
In honour to the victor, has decreed
With all the state of Majesty to meet him,
Mark well Arsaces, mark his look, his carriage,
With what demeanor he supports his fortune;
Then swift returning, to my longing ear
Display that scene, which custom's tyrant law
Forbids the eye of Persia's virgin Princess. [*Ex, Daraxa.*]
Delusive splendor! painted, gew-gaw Phantom!
Ah, what avail thy palaces, thy domes,
Thy purple robes, thy canopy of Gold,
To ease the throbbings of a love-sick heart!
Happy your lot, ye unambitious maidens,
Who lowly born, your fleecy care attend,

Along

Along the plains by clear Choaspes water'd.
 Tyrannic laws restrain not your fond Breasts,
 'Tis love alone your faithful souls obey,
 Ye know no other Bonds. Could I, like you,
 The gentle wishes of my heart unfold,
 My fate would then be worthy of my Birth.

[Exit with her Maidens.]

SCENE II. *The STREET.*

*An outside View of a magnificent Temple
 of the Sun.*

PHARASMANES, *attended by Courtiers,
 Guards, &c.* MITHRINES and MIRVAN.

[Warlike Music at a distance.]

MIRVAN.

My Lord, the victor comes. Behold his banners,
 In state triumphant streaming to the gale.

A Military PROCESSION.

*Spoils, Prisoners, Standards, &c. Behind
 appears ARSACES, with Officers.*

ARSACES. *(kneeling to the King.)*

These Trophies, torn from Osröa's stern Brow,
 Amid the terrors of the field of death,
 Where, like the roar of agitated ocean,
 Where winds contending roll upon its surface
 The whitening foam, wars horrid clang resounded,
 Dread Pharasmanes, at your feet I lay.

PHARASMANES.

These trophies, chief, are your's; to you alone
 For peace, and freedom, Persia is indebted.

Methinks

Methinks I see our ancient heroes smile,
As from their beds of Asphodel they bend,
To hail the rival of their deathless glory.

A R S A C E S.

My royal master rates too high my service;
'Tis Pharasmanes who secures our freedom.
I was his servant, and am well repaid
To see my sovereign, and my country triumph.

PHARASMANES.

Auspicious day! this universal voice
Of gladness, echoing thro' the raptur'd city,
Calms every fear, and soothes my soul to peace.

M I T H R I N E S.

Yet this security may seal your ruin. *(aside.*

PHARASMANES.

But where, brave champion, shall thy merits find
Their due reward? Continue thy command,
Still lead my hosts to conquest, and to glory.
For these, the trophies of thy well-earn'd fame,
Preserve them sacred as the pledge of honor,
And know, amid these unexpected blessings,
Which heav'n propitious show's this day on Persia,
Thyself the noblest. Now awhile we leave you,
To social gratulations, and endearments;
That tribute render'd we expect your presence,
In private at our palace.

[Exit attended by his Guards and Mirvan.]

M I T H R I N E S.

To renown,
Enough has been bestow'd. Now friendship claims
Her right to welcome Persia's great deliv'rer.

A R S A C E S.

ARSACES.

Thus to salute the father of my mistress,
 The father of Semira, far exceeds
 The joy I felt when conquest crown'd my fabre.
 But say, Mithines, say how fares thy daughter,
 That beauteous maid, to whom my soul is wedded?

MITHRINES.

Within this hour I left her in her chamber,
 Impatient waiting for the happy moment,
 Which brings her back the lord of her affections.

ARSACES.

Lead then, Oh lead me, instant to her presence;
 My soul in tumults bounds to meet my love;
 To you, brave Cosrohes, I leave in charge
 These pledges of our triumph. Come, Mithrines,
 For hours are ages till I greet Semira. [Exeunt.

S C E N E III.

A Chamber in MITHRINES' House.

Enter SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

How slowly moves the silent foot of time,
 Compar'd with lovers wishes! They surpass
 His rapid progress, more than vollied lightnings
 Outstrip, in swiftness, the diurnal speed
 Of Mithra's flaming coursers. Could these eyes
 Once more behold my lord! Yet horrid fears
 Curdle my veins, and nip the blooming joy,
 With which the prospect of his near arrival
 Should swell my bosom. Well, too well, I know
 Stern Pharasmanes' unrelenting temper;

Not

Nor dread I less Arfaces' resolution,
 And manly sensibility. Too plain,
 My conscious mind presages some disaster,
 Some inauspicious destiny impends
 Malignant o'er us. Wretched was I born,
 And fortune, fam'd for fickleness, and change,
 With me, alone, her wanted nature loses.
 But look, my hero comes !

Enter ARSACES and MITHRINES.

ARSACES.

My life's best treasure !

'Twas the fond prospect of this dear embrace,
 Which nerv'd my arm amid the shock of battle.
 'To thee I owe the trophies I have gain'd ;
 For, had ambition been my only spur,
 Nor love impell'd me to deserve thy smiles,
 My arm had sunk beneath stern Osröa's prowess.
 All-gracious Mithra ! whence these heaving sighs ?
 This sadness on your aspect ?

SEMIRA.

Oh, Arfaces !

ARSACES.

What ! unexpected—Is it thus Semira
 Greets my arrival ? Is the name of love
 Become so hateful ? Still, Semira, silent !
 Will you not speak to me ?

SEMIRA.

Grief stops my utterance.

I cannot, cannot speak. Oh, Sir ! my father—

ARSACES.

Ha ! speak, Mithrines ; let me not remain
 Thus tortur'd by suspense.

MITHRINES.

M I T H R I N E S.

My lips had told you
 When first we met, but cruel I esteem'd it,
 To interrupt the current of your joy,
 With sad description of our galling wrongs.
 We live, my friend, beneath a cruel yoke;
 While haughty Ofröa was unsubdued,
 This Pharasmanes, this abandon'd tyrant—

A R S A C E S.

Amazement all! What mean thy words, Mithrines?

M I T H R I N E S.

Their fatal purport will too soon be blazon'd;
 When you behold, sad fruit of all your triumphs,
 Your lov'd Semira ravish'd from your arms.

A R S A C E S.

Semira ravish'd—Whence these fatal hints?
 What ruffian slave—My brain is all confusion,
 Explain the secret lab'ring of your mind,
 And let the worst—

M I T H R I N E S.

Prepare thee then to hear
 A tale will wring with agony thy bosom.
 Know Pharasmanes has this morn demanded
 My daughter for his queen.

A R S A C E S.

His queen! distraction!
 Semira Persia's empress! Have you both
 Consented to betray—

S E M I R A.

Betray thee, say'st thou?
 Unkind interpretation! No, Arsaces,
 May Orosmades leave me to despair,
 If e'er I swerv'd in fancy from my vows.

M I T H R I N E S.

MITHRINES.

What art, what story could I specious feign?
Should I have urg'd him with his hideous crimes,
And brav'd his fury? No, 'tis you alone
Can stem the torrent of his lawless pow'r,
Unbind our chains, and vindicate our rights.

ARSACES.

The hearts of monarchs should be spotless temples,
Where unpolluted incense ought to burn;
And would, but sordid, sacrilegious hands,
Defile the altar, and prophane the gift.
Yet would you madly quench the sacred flame,
Because the priests appointed to prepare
The hallow'd sacrifice, are false and wicked?

SEMIRA.

Oh! think Semira must be your's no longer,
Will you desert her? will you view her dragg'd,
A wretched victim, to the nuptial altar?
See savage Priests perform those dreadful rites,
Which must for ever part me from Arsaces?

ARSACES.

Forbid it honour! Shield me from the image!
It stings to madness. No, not Pharasmanes,
Shall tear you from my bosom. I will haste,
Will instant fly, and tell him all my passion.
He cannot treat—

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

My lord, the king expects
Your instant presence, on affairs of moment,
Touching his empire's weal.

ARSACES.

A R S A C E S.

I wait his pleasure. [*Ex. Officer.*]

Weep not, Semira, dry those pearly drops,
Nor doubt but heav'n will smile upon our love;
Indulge the hope, and quit these tender fears,
For never, never will I yield thy beauties,
Tho' Arimanius rain upon my head
Incessant plagues, and foul-corroding anguish. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE IV. *A Chamber in the Palace.*

Enter PHARASMANES *attended.*

PHARASMANES.

I like not this enthusiasm of the people;
His spreading fame my regal state eclipses:
It hangs around me like a low'ring cloud,
Whose fullen veil obstructs the blaze of Mithra.
Should blind ambition urge him to usurp
My regal throne, my fascinated subjects
Would soon enable him to gain his purpose,
Leaving their monarch but the empty title,
And despicable pageantry of pow'r.
Some strong connection must secure his fealty.

Enter an OFFICER.

OFFICER.

My lord, Arsaces will with duteous haste
Obey your dread behest.

PHARASMANES.

'Tis well. Thou leave us. [*Ex. Officer.*]
What if I pledge him Ariana's hand?
That gift at once repays his ev'ry service,
And seals him mine for ever. 'Tis resolv'd.
But soft, he comes.

E

Enter

Enter A R S A C E S.

PHARASMANES.

Retire, and quit the chamber,

All but Arfaces.—Welcome, valiant general.

Fain would your sovereign pay the mighty debt;

Your honourable services demand ;

But since your merits, and atchievements, soar

Superior to 'reward,' accept such honours,

Tho' far inferior to your rated worth,

As Pharasmanes to your choice can offer.

A R S A C E S.

My royal master, when for you, and Persia,

I brav'd the horrors of remorseless war,

No selfish motive drew me to the field.

To prove my duty was my honest aim,

And if that duty can preserve your favour,

My heart rests satisfied, nor pants for more.

PHARASMANES.

Not so can mine. All Persia shall behold,

That Pharasmanes burns to pay the tribute,

Due to the man whose arm redeem'd his country.

You shall partake the bed of Ariana,

And mix your blood—What means this down-cast aspect?

A R S A C E S.

My senses are confus'd. So vast an honour

Surpasses my belief. Shall I, a subject,

Aspire to her, whose princely rank demands

A scepter'd monarch—

PHARASMANES.

No—this thin disguise

Deceives not me. This feign'd respect, Arfaces,

Too plain appears a cover to refuse

The

The honour I intend you. Canst thou deem
Our sister's hand, beneath your proud acceptance?

A R S A C E S.

My royal lord misapprehends my words.
So fair a prize would pay a life of toils;
But he, whose soul is knit in fond affection
To one dear maid, shuns, partial, all engagements,
But thine his own devoted heart has fram'd.

PHARASMANES.

Where dwells this beauty, whose superior charms
Eclipse her sex? Disclose to me her name,
Myself, with joy, will seal the nuptial contract,
And haste to crown your happiness.

A R S A C E S.

Semira.

PHARASMANES.

Semira! saidst thou?

A R S A C E S.

Daughter of Mithrines.

By heav'n, it moves him! (*aside*.)

PHARASMANES.

Is your passion mutual?

Perhaps some rival may dispute her heart.

A R S A C E S.

I do not fear it. What presumptuous rival—

PHARASMANES.

And if there should?

A R S A C E S.

Why let him, at his peril;

Arsaces' sword can equally defend

His sovereign, and his mistress.

PHARASMANES.

Then, proud chief,
Know, 'gainst that sov'reign must thy sword defend it.
To Persia's monarch is Semira destin'd.

A R S A C E S.

To Pharasmanes? Mighty Orosmades!
Are thus my faithful services—Impossible!
My sovereign will relent; for not to him
Can I consent to yield up my Semira.
Her heav'nly beauty was the quick'ning spur,
Which urg'd me forward in the race of glory,
And gave me strength to guard my Prince, and country.
Her dear possession was the sole reward,
For which Arsaces sigh'd, and now he asks it.
Yes, that Arsaces, who so oft has shed
His willing blood at Pharasmanes' call,
Now claims—

PHARASMANES, (*Half drawing his sabre.*)

Ha! boaster! But I check my anger.
This once thy merits shall procure thy pardon:
But, hence, beware, nor dare incense that pow'r,
Whose pond'rous arm will crush thee to the earth.

A R S A C E S.

My royal master, if in aught my words
Have overleap'd the sacred bounds of duty,
Excuse my warmth; my faith, my heart, is your's;
Semira's love is all my bosom sighs for.
Within my heart her image, long engrav'd—

PHARASMANES.

Leave me; no more—This bold demeanor suits
Th' embattled field; but know before your sov'reign,
Obedience is your duty. Hence, and learn,
That Pharasmanes will unask'd do justice. [*Ex. Arsaces.*

Ha!

Ha! rival'd by my slave! that slave so pow'rful!
 Oh! curse of royalty! But hence complainings!
 Shall Pharasmanes dread a subject's menace?
 No, to evince my plenitude of pow'r,
 And strike his soul with terror at my firmness,
 To-morrow's sun shall view the solemn rite,
 And to my arms consign Mithrines' daughter. [Exit.

S C E N E V.

A Chamber in MITHRINES' House.

Enter ARSACES and SEMIRA.

A R S A C E S.

Yes, my Semira; yes, the die is cast;
 The fatal secret now stands all unfolded.
 His soul enamour'd doats on your perfections:
 I saw his bosom heave with lab'ring passions.
 But shall I yield thy beauties to a rival?
 Shall I behold him hang upon your smiles?
 Oh! Death! to gaze enraptur'd on your face,
 To touch your hands, to taste your fragrant breath?
 No, while this arm can wield my trusty sabre,
 Ne'er will Arsaces suffer such pollution.

S E M I R A.

Relentless gods! for what am I reserv'd?
 What hoard of misery is yet in store,
 To heap its horrors on a wretched woman?
 Oh! calm this tempest of conflicting passions,
 Nor rush upon inevitable death.
 Trust your Semira, on her truth rely;
 For here she vows, before yon glorious symbol,
 To sink unsullied to the dreary tomb,
 E'er she submit to violate her faith.

Enter

Enter MITHRINES, hastily.

MITHRINES.

Now say, Arsaces, did I falsely brand
This Pharasmanes, with the name of tyrant?
He has resolv'd to-morrow's sun shall view
His nuptials with Semira.

S E M I R A.

Fatal hour !

A R S A C E S.

Disgrace and ruin—am I then so fall'n—
'Tis past all suff'rance—Arbiters divine!
Have I for this preserv'd his tott'ring empire?
By heav'n, he dares not, Instant will I seek him,
And force him to confess his black injustice.
He dares not treat Arsaces, who has fix'd
His fallen throne, with mockery and insult. *[Exit.]*

S E M I R A.

Now the black tempest, which so long has brooded,
Is fully ripen'd, and prepar'd to lance
Its flaming bolts. Oh ! venerable Sir !
If e'er you held your wretched daughter dear,
Conceal these transports of a heart in anguish,
And stop these horrid nuptials ; while she flies
To sooth Arsaces' rising indignation,
And win him from his fatal resolution,
To brave the tyrant's merciless resentment. *[Exit.]*

MITHRINES.

Yes, fear no longer these detested nuptials.
Since thy weak heart disclaims Aspasia's Cause,
Nor these disgraceful, aggravated insults,
Can rouse Arsaces to dethrone the tyrant,
His slow resolves I will await no longer ;

This

This night Tigranes, his attendant eunuch,
Whom force of gold has won to aid my vengeance,
Shall execute the meditated blow,
On which my soul in secret long has brooded,
And in his palace, stab this Pharasmanes.
Peace then, dear spirit! e'er the blush of Mithra,
Whose western beams now gild the broad horizon,
Shall deck afresh yon orient arch with purple,
Their due revenge thy ashes shall receive.
But should Tigranes fail in the attempt—

[After a pause.]

Why let him fail—his doom shall still be fix'd.
Within his chamber will I drop a scroll,
Whose seeming friendship shall proclaim Arsaces,
In secret plotting some atrocious scheme,
To seize his throne and life. His jealous rage
Will prompt him soon to trust the specious tale;
Then will his temper goad him on vindictive,
To deeds must seal infallible his ruin;
Must wake, perforce, the fury of Arsaces;
Rousing with him all irritated Sufa,
To save their guardian hero from his malice,
And drag the monster headlong from his throne.
Stern Arimanius! deity of vengeance!
Arise, and aid thy own inspir'd achievement,
Let no remorse arrest Tigranes' hand,
But steel his bosom, and direct his dagger. *[Exit.]*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

A C T

ACT III. SCENE I.

The Gardens of the Palace. The Sun rising.

Enter MITHRINES.

MITHRINES.

PERDITION seize the slave ! The palace seems
As calm, and silent as the peaceful bow'r
Of Innocence. Already, from the ocean,
Mithra breaks forth, and yet Tigranes comes not.
By heav'n I hop'd—[*alarm.*]
—Ha ! whence that sudden
The deed is now performing ; nerve his arm, [noise ?
Stern Arimanius !—Poison to my fight !
The tyrant lives.

*Enter PHARASMANES, without his Crown
and Mantle, his Sword drawn and bloody,
followed by his Attendants.*

PHARASMANES.

Each avenue be guarded,
Let none escape the palace. Pow'rs of heav'n !
Can Persia nourish such a secret viper ?
Whom shall a monarch henceforth trust, Mithrines,
When those appointed to attend his person,
And those he deem'd his firmest friends, unite
In secret combinations for his life ?

MITHRINES.

MITHRINES.

What means my Sovereign? Breathes there such a wretch?

PHARASMANES

Tigranes is the slave. But Orosmades
The sacred person of a king defends.
I heard th' assassin, stealing unassur'd,
With sacrilegious step, across my chamber;
My trusty sabre instantly I seiz'd
And 'mid the yet undissipated darkness,
Pursu'd the ruffian with uncertain aim.
Rous'd at the noise, my faithful guards rush'd forward,
To save their master's life, when, lo! the villain
Had 'scap'd my wrath, but not before my sword
Had pierc'd his breast, and drunk his treacherous blood.

MITHRINES.

Whence know you then the murd'rer was Tigranes?

PHARASMANES.

His voice betray'd him. When I gave the wound
He shriek'd aloud.

MITHRINES.

To me consign the caitiff,
And let him find th' immediate death he merits.

PHARASMANES.

Rest thee, Mithrines, I have giv'n that charge
To Mirvan's care.

MITHRINES.

Tigranes! Hell reward him!
What could induce the traitor to attempt
His sovereign's life?

PHARASMANES.

Not his the black contrivance:
Too plain I see, that promises and bribes,

F

Seduc'd

Seduc'd the wretch to execute the purpose,
 Invented by Arfaces. Impious slave!
 Whom thirst of gold could influence, to become
 The foul associate of another's guilt.
 Yes, 'tis Arfaces, whose o'er-weening pride,
 Presumptuous, plann'd this base assassination.

MITHRINES.

I cannot think the noble, brave Arfaces,
 Would to his sovereign prove so dire a traitor.
 And yet ambition, jealousy, and love,
 Combin'd, may prove too potent for allegiance.
 Belov'd by all, with victory elate,
 The idol of the troops—My mind misgives me—
 Men are but men—perhaps he may forget
 That true obedience, which he owes his sovereign.

Enter M I R V A N.

M I R V A N.

Thrice, royal Sir, I search'd the palace round,
 Without success, the catiff has escap'd.
 This paper only in your chamber lay.

PHARASMANES.

What have we here?— (*reading*)

“Beware thee of Arfaces:

“Ambition is his vice, and tho' it were not,
 “Yet what the people, to his person wedded
 “And ripe for insurrection, may attempt,
 “Stands much in doubt. The army his, his pow'r,
 “At present wanting but the name of monarch,
 “'Tis easy for him to assume that title.
 “The times are perilous—beware Arfaces.”

No name—whence comes it? Sure some loyal subject—
 No matter whence—it proves my doubts well founded.
 Are these thy arts? Will nothing less, thou traitor,
 Than

Than empire satisfy thy soaring pride?
 This, this compleats the measure of thy daring.
 By yon bright god, yon living fount of light!
 Thy pride shall meet its merited reward.

MITHRINES.

Behold, Mithrines joins in your revenge,
 To crush his hopes, and blast his horrid treason.

PHARASMANES.

Thou art a friend, indeed. On thee, Mithrines,
 My soul relies in safety. Haste thee, Mirvan,
 Seize the proud ruffian, force his sabre from him,
 And drag him instant to our palace fetter'd.

[*Exit Mirvan.*]

Soon shall he find his infamous plottings,
 His machinations travers'd. Thou, Mithrines,
 With careful search, find out the slave Tigranes,
 And while the rack tears all his quiv'ring limbs,
 Force from his lips confession of his guilt.

[*Exit attended.*]

MITHRINES.

The dastard then has fail'd: That hope is vanish'd.
 Yet one resource is left. This cruel scorn,
 These cutting insults, must inflame Arfaces,
 Or will arouse the spirits of the people,
 To rescue their defender from the tyrant,
 And either way my just revenge is answer'd.

S C E N E II.

Enter SEMIRA, hastily.

SEMIRA.

Where is Mithrines? Heav'ns! what dreadful tale
 Is this which spreads thro' every street of Susa?

Wretched

Wretched Semira ! inauspicious hour !
 What dire resolve could instigate my father
 To this unhappy deed ? What desp'rate purpose
 Could urge him thus to stain Arsaces' honor,
 And brand the hero with the foul reproach
 Of that attempt ?—too manifest she sees,
 His own resentment plann'd.

M I T H R I N E S.

Degenerate girl !

Dost thou not know 'tis thirst of great revenge
 Impells me on ? Revenge, the food of Souls,
 Whose fiery instinct lifts them from the earth,
 And makes them dare such formidable deeds,
 As strike with terror un aspiring spirits.
 This last indignity must seal the ruin
 Of Pharasmanes, and I will enjoy it,
 Tho' it involve me in the same destruction ;
 Nor let Semira dread her lover's safety ;
 This crisis bodes no danger to Arsaces,
 For Susarous'd will guard the hero's life.

S E M I R A.

Alas, too tardy will their aid arrive.
 The tyrant gives no respite to resentment,
 But instant death succeeds to accusation.
 Will you then fully your unspotted name ?
 Will you involve the innocent in ruin ?
 Why in your anger, ye avenging gods !
 Why did you force this hated life upon me,
 To make me feel this aggravated torment ?
 Oh hear me, Sir, yet hear your pleading child,

[Kneeling.

Thus low, thus prostrate, on the ground behold me,
 Your feet with tears bedewing. Pity, pity—

M I T H R I N E S.

M I T H R I N E S.

Leave me, Semira; plain, too plain, the cause
Which spurs you on to check my rising hopes,
And blast my promiss'd harvest. Hence, and leave me.

S E M I R A.

I cannot, must not, leave you, till you hear me.
I'll would Semira act as suits your daughter,
Could she unmov'd behold a father perpetrate
Deeds, which, in ages yet unborn, will stain
Indelible his mem'ry: Could she view
The man her heart—

M I T H R I N E S.

Apostate to my blood!
And is it thus, th' ignoble slave of love,
Thus thou wou'd'st sacrifice Aspasia's honour?
Hence then, and make Mithrines too thy victim.
Ungrateful child! Hence, publish what thou know'st,
And save Arfaces by thy father's death. *[Exit.]*

S E M I R A.

Now, now Semira is completely wretched.
Would I had died when first these full-swol'n eyes
Beheld the sight! I then had slept in peace;
No more the sport and mockery of fortune.
Will not some lightning blast the ruthless tyrant,
The cause of all? Oh, horrible alternative!
Where shall I turn? Concealment, or discovery,
Present me equal ruin. If I speak,
The guilt of parricide—terrific thought!
And if I keep the secret undisclos'd,
My lover falls beneath the monster's fury.
Distracting crisis! Oh, ill-fated maid!

Enter

Enter ARSACES, crossing the Stage.

S E M I R A.

Arsaces, whence this haste?

A R S A C E S.

To prove my honour.

Some trait'rous ruffian has assail'd the king.

Tho' he has wrong'd me, treated me with scorn,

Yet will I prove my loyalty unblemish'd.

S E M I R A.

Fly, fly, Arsaces; if you love me, fly.

Thou art thyself suspected of the treason.

A R S A C E S.

It cannot be. Oh! why, my gentle love,

Why will you nourish visionary terrors?

Fear's jaundic'd eye discolours every object,

Frames to itself a thousand hideous shapes,

'Then starts at phantoms of its own creation.

S E M I R A.

I dread no phantoms; mine are solid terrors.

A R S A C E S.

Your tenderness misleads you—but a thought

Must from his bosom chase the foul suspicion,

And sting him with remorse. His throne, his realm,

Preserv'd from Osröa's all-dreaded ravage,

Are standing monuments Arsaces merits not

The name of traitor. Should he yet attempt

To take my life, my fall will be aveng'd.

S E M I R A.

Oh! talk not thus. Should heav'n avenge your death,

In thunders darted on his miscreant head,

What can your destitute Semira find

To compensate your loss? Will that restore you?

Will

Will that re-animate your breathless corse?
Fly, if you love me; to my weakness yield,
And save a life, on which depends Semira's.

A R S A C E S.

Thou angel virtue! hush these apprehensions.
Heav'n will preserve me to reward thy truth.
The heart of guilt unconscious, unappall'd,
Beholds the flock of worlds. I cannot think him
So destitute of royalty, and honour,
To seek his death, who fac'd grim-vifag'd war,
His throne defending; but—

S C E N E III.

Enter MIRVAN with Guards.

A R S A C E S.

What tidings, Mirvan?
Is Pharasmanes still in danger? Say,
Does he yet need my presence to defend—

M I R V A N.

By me—with grief I execute my orders—
By me our monarch—

A R S A C E S.

Yes, my fears are true.
On eagle pinion— *(going.)*

M I R V A N.

Rest thee, generous warrior!
Fir'd with unjust suspicion, Pharasmanes,
By me, demands your sabre. 'Tis his pleasure,
Your person chain'd, and guarded, be conducted
Immediate to the palace.

SEMIRA.

S E M I R A.

Now the shafts
Of fate are lanc'd, and ruin is approaching.

A R S A C E S.

Ha! force my sabre! violate my person!
Impossible! Some frenzy must have seiz'd him.

M I R V A N.

Trust me, Arsaces, with sincere abhorrence
Mirvan beholds this infamous procedure;
Beholds that valour which preserv'd his country,
Thus flagrantly dishonour'd. Tho' constrain'd
By Pharasmanes, with unfeign'd affliction
He comes to execute his tyrant pleasure;
Nor mourns he more your fortune, than his own,
Reluctant forc'd to break the bonds of friendship,
And offer insults to the man he honours.

A R S A C E S.

'Tis Pharasmanes gives th' affront, not you,
Who must perform your trust.—Receive a sword,

(Unsheathing and giving it.)

Unsheath'd alone upon the foes of Persia.
When you resign it, bid him but reflect,
For whom its blade so lately reek'd with gore,
And if his heart retains the sense of feeling,
The blood will mantle on his crimson cheek,
Now lead me to my prison. We must part,
Thou dearest treasure of Arsaces' soul,
But long it cannot be. This futile charge,
Will vanish swifter than a morning vapor,
And, like yon orb, my innocence shine forth
With renovated lustre. Then be hush'd
Each tender terror. On the rock of hope

Support

Support your resolution, nor permit
The visionary bodings of despair,
To agonize your heart. Adieu, my love!
Thou ever gentle—

SEMIRA, (*catching hold of his robe.*)

No, thou shalt not leave me.
They shall not sever us—I'll share your fortune;
Together will we die.

A R S A C E S.

Thou wond'rous Woman!
To see thy anguish rends my heart afunder.
Oh! if you love me, dry those precious tears,
Nor let dejection over-pow'r your firmness.
This low'ring cloud, which now hangs gloomy round us,
Will dissipate, and leave—

SEMIRA.

No, never, never.
The hand of death is on us; never more
Shall I behold thee. Oh! my brain, my brain!
They shall not part us. Yet a moment stay,
A little, little moment, while I fly,
And, on my knees, conjure the king to spare thee.
If aught of pity harbours in his breast,
My tears, and groans, shall wake its soft emotions.

A R S A C E S.

Thou dearest pattern of unfulfilled truth,
Wring not a heart, which feels thy every pang,
With these affecting images of fondness.
Vain are those hopes, thy tenderness, and love,
Alone gives birth to. He, who thus can break
A sovereign's sacred honour, will be deaf
To beauty, tho' in tears. Then arm your soul
To bear our fortune. Were Semira happy,
Death has no terrors for Arsaces.

G

SEMIRA.

S E M I R A.

Death !

Tremendous sound ! I cannot, cannot bear it.
 Merciless tyrant ! Now, ev'n now, to lose thee,
 With all thy glories blushing on thy brow—

Enter an OFFICER.

O F F I C E R.

My lord, the king's impatient, and commands
 Your person instant guarded to the palace—

A R S A C E S.

Inhuman ! but I come.

S E M I R A.

Ha ! who art thou,

Whose raven-tongue screams out my dismal knell ?
 Save, shield me—Oh, my heart !

A R S A C E S.

Alas ! she faints.

With what convulsive grasps she strains my hand.
 Oh ! spare me, Heav'n ! this soul-distracting scene !
 The sight unmans me. I shall die a coward.
 Tear, force me from her, while my limbs obey me.
 To thy good friendship, Mirvan, let me trust
 This lovely mourner ; watch reviving sense,
 And calm the agonies which pierce her bosom.
 Now to my dungeon. Death, thy pangs are past.

*[Exit guarded.]*S E M I R A, *(recovering.)*

Where is Arsaces ? Have they dragg'd him from me ?
 Dragg'd him to prison ? unrelenting ruffians !
 Look down, thou sacred spirit of Aspasia,
 Look down, in pity, and support Semira
 To bear these sorrows. Is there no redemption ?

No

No way to save him? Hear me, hear me, Mirvan,
If you e'er lov'd, our sad condition pity,
And find some means to shield my lord, my hero.

M I R V A N.

Heav'n knows how freely I wou'd shed my blood
To save Arsaces, and revenge my country.
But Orosmales frowns upon my wish,
And crowns the tyrant with his choicest favours.

S E M I R A.

Are there no hopes? Increase not thus my woes,
Nor drive a heart, nigh bursting, to despair.
Ye righteous gods! who hold the awful balance,
Have ye forgot to wield the sword of justice?

M I R V A N.

Hear me, Semira, yet a distant hope,
Like Mithra's beams, emerging from a cloud,
Rises to cheer th' inhospitable wild,
And gild the barren prospect.

S E M I R A.

Name it, name it.
Oh! tell me, Mirvan, instant let me know,
The brave design thy honest heart has form'd,
That I may fly upon the whirlwind's wing,
To rescue my Arsaces from destruction.

M I R V A N.

On your own conduct hangs the hero's safety.

S E M I R A.

What mean'st thou, Mirvan? instantly unfold—

M I R V A N.

Would but Semira condescend to wear
E'en the remotest semblance of compliance
With Pharasmanes' passion, o'er his soul
So absolute she rules, his amorous heart

Would grant immediate every tender wish
Her love could form.

S E M I R A.

And think'tt thou then, Semira,

Loft to all shame, will violate her vows,
Her honour, her fidelity, to save
That life, Arfaces so perserv'd would spurn?
My sick'ning heart recoils at the proposal;
No, in my breast plant pointed daggers rather,
Or wrap me living in the shroud of death,
When I descend to falsehood so detested,
Such fatal perjury.

M I R V A N.

Will then Semira

No danger brave, to save from death the hero?

S E M I R A.

Yes, point me out, propose but any means,
Shall keep my faith, my virgin faith unspotted,
For his dear sake, I will forget my sex,
Will dare such deeds as make a woman tremble,
And bid defiance—

M I R V A N.

Then pursue my counsel.

Mithra forbid, that Mirvan should persuade
The fair Semira to betray her lord,
Or wed with Pharasmanes! No, his scope
Would but induce her, outwardly to wear
That sensibility, she cannot feel,
And feign the appearance of those soft emotions,
Which, while they leave her constancy unblemish'd,
Will save her lover to reward her truth.

S E M I R A.

And must Semira condescend to prove

A poor dissembler? Must she teach her tongue

To speak a language foreign to her heart?—
Yet is it not to save my hero's life?
A sacred cause, which virtue might be proud of.

M I R V A N.

It is, it is; then haste, with instant speed,
And e'er Arsaces is brought forth to judgment,
With soft persuasions mollify his wrath.

S E M I R A.

I yield to your intreaties, tho' my heart
Shudders with terror. May it prove successful!
Alas! I dread, the skies will never smile
On base equivocation.

M I R V A N.

Yes, Semira,

In such a cause, so sacred, so momentous,
Diffimulation is itself a virtue;
And every god approving must behold it.

S E M I R A.

There are, I know, among our sex, who love
Dissembling arts; whose joy it is to see
Admiring crouds attend upon their steps,
And at their shrine blind adoration pay.
Such conduct I despise. Arsaces only
Could ever win my love; for him I live.
My virgin vows to him I faithful plighted,
And while I breathe, they ever shall be his.
This one possession is beyond the reach
Of pow'r or fortune: Never shall they tear
His image from my heart, my soul defies
Their strength combin'd, and triumphs in its truth.

[*Exeunt.*]

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The Presence Chamber.

PHARASMANES *on his Throne, Courtiers,*
Guards, MITHRINES, MIRVAN.

PHARASMANES.

CONDUCT Arsaces, Mirvan, to our presence.
[Exit Mirvan.]

When subjects thus their sovereign's life assail,
 'Tis time to wield the awful sword of justice,
 And with the dust the daring traitors mate.

Enter SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

Oh, Pharasmanes, ease my anxious heart,
 O'erwhelm'd with fears, and trembling for your person.
 Is yet the assassin found?

MITHRINES.

Ha, what new riddle!

What unimagined—

(aside.)

PHARASMANES.

Does the fair Semira
 Feel such concern for Pharasmanes' life?
 My lovely Empress, let no apprehensions
 Disturb that gentle bosom of his safety;

The

The murd'rous ruffian cannot be conceal'd.
 His crime once punish'd, on the wings of love
 I fly, to meet my beautiful Semira ;
 Fly to confirm our union at the altar,
 And lose the cares of empire in her arms.
 This arrogant conspirator, Arfaces—

S E M I R A.

Should he ungrateful have contriv'd the deed,
 His guilt calls loud for vengeance. Yet beware,
 Lest his destruction seal your own perdition.
 The populace adore him : Should they rise
 In arms tumultuous, to avenge his death,
 That sacred life—the thought congeals my veins.

P H A R A S M A N E S.

A moment's pause his innocence will 'stablish,
 Or drag his treason from its secret covert ;
 For Mirvan has my orders to conduct
 His pris'ner to our throne.

S E M I R A.

He must not see me.
 To find me here would give suspicion birth. (*aside.*)
 Dread Sir, I leave you, scenes of awful justice,
 Ill suit a woman—

P H A R A S M A N E S.

Stay thee, fair Semira,
 And be thyself a witness of his falshood.

M I T H R I N E S.

My lord, behold Arfaces.

S E M I R A.

Dire mischance !
 Where shall I fly, this interview to shun ? (*aside.*)
 It ill becomes a woman, and a subject—

P H A R A S -

PHARASMANES.

She who can bend a monarch to her pow'r,
May spurn that title. Destin'd Queen of Persia,
My throne, my realm, are your's.

SEMIRA.

Oh ! mercy, Heav'n !

On what a precipice expos'd I stand !
Should I depart, his jealousy, arous'd,
Will antedate the ruin of Arsaces ;
And if I stay my lover thinks me false—
To what a crisis—

(*aside.*)

PHARASMANES.

Come, my chosen Empress,
Ascend this throne, henceforth your regal seat,
And grace a monarch's splendor.

SEMIRA.

I obey.

Mithra ! support me in this dreadful moment,
And save me from distraction !

(*aside.*)

S C E N E II.

Enter MIRVAN with ARSACES in chains.

ARSACES.

Pow'r's immortal !

Can I believe it ? Shall I trust my senses ?
Semira seated by the tyrant's side ?

(*aside.*)

PHARASMANES.

Unhallow'd slave ! whose sacrilegious hand,
Would dye thy sabre in thy sovereign's blood ;
Well had thy treason merited its fate,
Had my just rage, on lightning's wings, descended,
And trod thee instant to primeval dust.

But

But that the world may know a monarch's justice,
 We grant thee pow'r to purge thee of thy crimes :
 If then thy virtue-conscious dare the trial,
 Stand forth, and vindicate your injur'd fame,
 From all suspicion of so foul a treason.

A R S A C E S.

Down, rising passion. Yes I will be calm ;
 Will bear my lot with fortitude and patience. (*aside.*)
 Which is my judge ? depends Arfaces' fate
 On Pharasmanes', or Semira's nod ?

PHARASMANES.

On both. Semira is my destin'd Empress.

A R S A C E S.

Pefidious beauty ! hast thou then betray'd me ?
 I will not think it. Tell me, I conjure thee,
 Why I behold thee on the throne of Persia,
 By Pharasmanes seated ? Ha ! not speak ?
 Am I then deem'd unworthy of an answer ?
 Inconstant, false Semira ! This alone,
 This unexpected perjury could vanquish
 My firm resolves. For this then has my arm
 Defied the demon of insatiate war,
 And combatted for Persia, to behold
 A faithless woman treat me with derision ?
 My fame dishonour'd, branded for a villain,
 An infamous assassin ? Patience, Heav'n !

S E M I R A.

Unequall'd misery ! Oh, wretched maid !
 Open thou earth, and cover me for ever ! (*aside.*)

A R S A C E S.

Oh ! my fond heart ! Thou false, inhuman fair one !
 How have I hung, have doated on thy look !
 Had'st thou been faithful, on thy snowy breast

H

I would

I would have lull'd my sorrows into peace,
 And thought the world well barter'd for thy love.
 But thou to join, to league with Pharasmanes,
 Heaping disgrace, and ruin, on my head——

PHARASMANES.

And deem'st thou, Slave, Semira ever lov'd thee?
 No, speak, my Empress, let him hear those lips
 Pronounce his fate, and crush those tow'ring hopes,
 His folly bosom'd.

A R S A C E S.

Short will be this triumph.
 She, who can break those oft-repeated vows,
 Which righteous Heav'n has register'd, will prove
 More false, more changeful, than th' inconstant moon.
 Trust not her smiles, her flatt'ring honey'd words,
 She will deceive you, when you least suspect her.

S E M I R A.

Shame! rage! distraction! barbarous Arsaces!
 How have I merited this cruel insult?

PHARASMANES.

Insult indeed! Thou coward, boasting Traitor!
 Aid me, Semira, aid me to invent
 Some mighty torture, equal to his guilt.

S E M I R A. (*rising.*)

It will not be—no longer can I bear—
 My soul is rack'd—ten thousand, thousand, vultures
 Are preying on my heart.

PHARASMANES.

You must not leave us,
 Nor by your absence, give him cause for triumph.
 Exert the dignity of Persia's Empress,
 And vindicate your honour from the stains,

With

With which his perjur'd insolence defiles
Your fame, and virtue. Tell the slave, that heart
Was ever true, and constant to its vows.—

S E M I R A.

Yes, ruthless Tyrant, since you force my presence,
My lips no more shall speak unwilling falsehoods,
But boldly own that fondness for Arsaces,
Which sways my heart.

(She descends from the throne, and embraces Arsaces.)

Thy cruelties I hate,
Thy proffer'd love I spurn. In hope to melt
Thy stony heart, and save a life, belov'd
By gods, and men, I feign'd that tender passion,
My bosom never felt. But hence, deceit!
That cause to Heav'n henceforward will I leave,
Nor shall my lips again pronounce that falsehood,
My soul abjures.

A R S A C E S.

Oh! unexampled virtue!

Again I live,

P H A R A S M A N E S.

(descending from his throne.)

Betray'd! insulted! guards,
Hence with that Traitor, to some loathsome dungeon;
There bind him fast, with triple bolts, and chains,
Fix'd on the rack extend his caitiff trunk,
Till writhing in extremity of anguish,
His lips confess his treach'rous machinations,
And own the justice of a monarch's fury.

A R S A C E S.

I scorn thy racks, my happiness is plac'd
Beyond thy reach. Enjoy thy throne, thy pow'r
I envy not. One gentle heart alone
I wish'd to gain, and since that heart is mine,
These manacles with pleasure I can wear,

And

And unappall'd meet death. Adieu ! my love !
 Forgive those doubts which wrong'd thy matchless virtue,
 Unspotted still preserve thy virgin faith
 For him, whose veins shall pour their vital crimson,
 To seal his vows, and leave the rest to Heav'n.

[Exit with Mirvan guarded.]

S E M I R A :

Some god in mercy give me instant death !
 Oh ! if the soft benignity of pity, *(kneeling.)*
 The flinty rigour of your heart e'er soften'd,
 If you would wish to rescue me from madness,
 Recal the mandate, save his precious life.
 Nay frown not on me. False, unequal gods !
 And must Semira sue in vain for mercy ?
 Oh ! no, I rave, thou can'st not be so ruthless,
 Thou can'st not view me bathe thy feet with tears.

P H A R A S M A N E S.

Yes, weep, thou false one, thou hast tears at will ;
 But pleading angels shall not gain his pardon.
 This hour is mine, and vengeance shall be crown'd.
 One glorious moment dooms the Traitor dead,
 And gives thy heav'n of beauty to my arms.

S E M I R A. *(rising.)*

Perish the thought ! to thy embrace devoted ?
 No, thou fell monster, I defy thy menace.
 Stretch these poor limbs exanimate and palid
 Beneath your feet, 'tis all your pow'r can compass.
 My constant heart with indignation spurns
 Your tainted vows, and braves your utmost rancor. *[Exit.]*

M I T H R I N E S.

(drawing his sabre, and following.)

Ha ! would'st thou bring thy parent to disgrace ?
 Thou fall'st this hour a victim——

P H A R A S-

PHARASMANES.

No, Mithrines,
My soul relents, not life is life without her.

MITHRINES.

She is unworthy such transcendent goodness ;
But that my sovereign is not apt to brood
On jealous thoughts, by heav'n it were enough——

PHARASMANES.

I would Semira were as true, and loyal.
Ungrateful beauty ! had'st thou crown'd my passion,
Unbouded pleasures on thy nod had waited,
And Persia view'd thy happiness with wonder.
In thee, Mithrines, now my hopes are center'd.
Haste, try your pow'r, a father may persuade,
May yet induce her to become my queen,
And leave that traitor to deserv'd perdition.

[Exit attended]

MITHRINES.

Plead for thee, Tyrant ! for a scorpion sooner !
Oh ! my Semira ! my unhappy daughter !
To see thy agonies my heart weeps blood,
They will undo me, will defeat my purpose ;
Arsaces too, my guiltless friend, I murder ;
But I am plung'd, and cannot now go backward.
Then steel my resolution, Arimanius,
Thou deadly memory of Aspasia's sufferings,
Rush on my soul, and goad my ling'ring fury.
'Tis done—Once more thy wrongs possess me wholly.
He shall not 'scape me, through a sea of blood
I will pursue him, will unceasing hunt him,
'Till in his heart I plunge my griding falchion.

[Exit.]

SCENE

S C E N E III.

*An outward Prison, with a View of an
inward one.*

Enter ARSACES, in Chains,

ARSACES.

Welcome this cave, this drear abode of horror,
Ye mufky dens, besmear'd with human gore,
Who oft have heard the shrieks of dying wretches,
Ring through your vaults in replicated echoes,
Receive a guest, triumphant from the bow'r,
Of laurell'd victory. Oh! bitter thought!
My lost Semira! there it rives my heart-strings.
How shall I leave that dear, unfriended maid?
Leave her a victim—may the fiend first blast him!
But peace, my soul; the everlasting ruler
Will doubtless arm his ministers to guard—
Yes, Orosmales, to thy care I leave her,
And in that thought will meet my fate resign'd.
Come then, thou dungeon, let me search thy secrets,
Sustain'd by conscious rectitude of conduct;
Calm let me stretch upon thy cold, damp pavement,
My limbs dishonour'd with these servile fetters.

(Goes into the inner Prison.)

Enter ARIANA, and an OFFICER.

ARIANA.

Produce your charge. This signet is the mark
Of Pharasmanes' will.

[Exit Officer into the inner Prison.]

The griefs he suffers

Obliterate his refusal of my hand,

And

And banish my repentment. Through each vein,
 Anew I feel the soft infection gliding
 Steal o'er my melting heart. Almighty love!—
 But soft, he comes. No mark of inward guilt
 Flashes conviction o'er his conscious cheek,
 But on his brow sits dignity unequall'd.

Enter A R S A C E S.

A R S A C E S.

What motive brings the beauteous Ariana,
 To this sad scene of horror? Princess, view
 Your brother's splendid gifts. Oh! instability
 Of mortal greatness! Yesterday my brow
 Was round encompass'd with the wreath of triumph,
 Now you behold me prison'd in a dungeon,
 As if unfit to breathe the the vital ether.

A R I A N A.

Indulge no more these heart-corroding thoughts.
 At my request the King forgives the past,
 And to his favour—

A R S A C E S.

What would Ariana?

A R I A N A.

Receives Arsaces. Yet, for such indulgence,
 He asks no more than simply to unfold
 The delp'rate deed, your jealousy occasion'd,
 And instant pardon follows your confession.

A R S A C E S.

First swift destruction seize me! Holy pow'rs!
 Am I so humbled?

A R I A N A.

Does Arsaces scruple
 To tread the path of duty, and allegiance?

A R S A C E S.

A R S A C E S.

What nam'st thou duty? Hence with such allegiance,
 No, leave me, Princess; to my dungeon leave me.
 Ne'er will Arsaces stain his name with falsehoods,
 To reign the sovereign of unnumber'd worlds.

A R I A N A.

This lordly stile but ill becomes the man,
 Who stands accus'd of perfidy atrocious.
 Be yet advis'd, in more submissive terms
 Defend your cause, nor fan the rising flame,
 By braving thus his pow'r.

A R S A C E S.

I cannot act
 The villain's part, and flatter where I'm injur'd.

A R I A N A.

On fate's dark verge you totter. Oh! reflect,
 How such untimely death will blast your laurels.

A R S A C E S.

The virtuous deeds which stamp our fame immortal,
 Alone deserve to measure our existence.
 The reptile herd, incumbrance of the earth,
 Who waste an useless, fourscore years, would merit
 No after name, although their date were lengthen'd
 To countless ages. But the chosen few,
 Who climb the steep to glory's cloud-crown'd temple,
 Though in the bloom of early youth they fall,
 Die full of years, as honors.

A R I A N A.

Oh, Arsaces!
 Can'st thou behold a Princess plead in vain?
 At her request consent, be yet intreated
 To guard that valued life, and hear the pray'r
 Of Ariana.

A R S A C E S.

A R S A C E S.

Ariana's pray'r!

A R I A N A.

Long have I lock'd the secret in my bosom ;
 But thus to view thee rush upon destruction,
 All thoughts erases of my rank, and sex,
 And makes me own the softness of my heart.

A R S A C E S.

Wound, wound not thus my soul ; but rather find
 Some instant means to hasten on his death,
 Who, were he free, could ne'er return your love,
 Nor grateful prove to such transcendent goodness.

A R I A N A.

Since Heav'n decrees it so, I yield to fate.
 Reject my offer'd hand, despise, abandon me,
 But live, ungrateful man, confess your crime,
 And meet a monarch's pardon ; or if life
 Is grown distasteful, do not fall with gyves
 On those victorious limbs. Again lead forth
 Our valiant squadrons to th' embattl'd field,
 And die triumphant 'mid the din of arms.

A R S A C E S.

The mind unconscious of internal guilt,
 Confronts its fate with smiles. To me 'tis equal,
 Whether these limbs shall meet their destin'd doom,
 Bow'd down with chains, or cas'd in shining steel.
 Whene'er I die, the manner of my fall,
 Shall sanctify the place, and leave my life
 Ennobled by my death. Adieu, fair Princess;
 This condescension ever shall remain
 Deep in the memory of Arsaces' grav'd ;
 But never, never, will he purchase life
 By infamous concessions.

[Exit to the inner prison.]

I

A R I A N A.

A R I A N A.

He is guiltless.

His fortitude confirms it. Fatal firmness!

And must he suffer? Must I see him fall?

No, let me fly, and clasp my brother's knees,

Nor ever leave him, 'till he seals his pardon.

Yes, he shall live, although he spurns, rejects me;

Let Ariana act as fits her station,

And prove her mind superior to her fortune. [Exit.

S C E N E IV.

A Chamber in MITHRINES' House.

SEMIRA *walking about in Agitation, and*

PANTHEA *attending.*

S E M I R A.

Where is the wretch, who feels a grief like mine,
Would wish to bear this painful load of being?

I loathe the world, and soon my poignant sorrows,

Shall free my spirit from its vain allurements,

Its visionary promises of bliss.

Yes, my Arsaces, my heroic lord,

Soon shall I join you in those blest'd abodes,

Where no fell tyrant shall disturb our peace.

P A N T H E A.

Virtues like your's on earth will be rewarded.

Then calm your griefs, dear madam, and await

The will of Heav'n submissive.

S E M I R A.

Calm my griefs!

Go breast a cataract, bind its thund'ring course,

And stop its headlong torrent to the main.

Search

Search through the records of remotest times,
 The mournful annals of mankind explore,
 And find a fate, than mine more big with horror.
 Let me not think—a father, and a lover—
 On every side distraction meets my view,

PANTHEA.

The fatal truth so forcibly assails me,
 It stops the accents on my falt'ring tongue. *(aside.)*

SEMIRA.

Cast on a shore, with beetled cliffs o'ergrown,
 A lost, forlorn, pale, trembling wretch, I stand.
 Marshall'd behind, ten thousand grisly monsters,
 Extend their fell inexorable jaws,
 Swift rushing to devour me; while, before,
 The mountain billows, with tremendous crash,
 Ope wide their vast unfathomable depth,
 'To swallow me for ever. Oh! Arsaces!
 Is this the fruit of thy triumphant labors?
 Must thou then fall like short-liv'd summer blossoms,
 Which meet the blast, and perish in the storm?
 Thou, who stood'st forth, like some celestial spirit,
 The guardian genius of thy sinking country—

PANTHEA.

My gracious mistress, be not overcome,
 But rouse the latent deity within you.
 Great souls, like your's, their destiny should meet
 With inborn dignity, and native firmness.

SEMIRA.

Think'st thou my heart is dead to every feeling?
 E'en now he lies upon the damp, cold earth,
 His manly limbs weigh'd down with galling fetters.
 Hark! how he groans, by cruel tortures mangled,
 While Heav'n denies the comfort of a friend,

To wipe the fainting moisture from his forehead,
 And sooth his agony. I cannot bear it.
 No, I will see him, will this hour behold him.
 What, what are threats, to my internal anguish?
 Nor gates of brass, nor adamant bars,
 Shall long have pow'r to keep me from his presence.

(going.

PANTHEA.

(catching hold of her robe.

Oh! stay, dear madam, hear Panthea's pray'r,
 Nor rashly tempt unconquerable fate.
 Myself will haste immediate to the prison,
 And bring you tidings of the god-like hero.

SEMIRA.

Oh! fly then, instant, to my injur'd lord:
 Since that sad pleasure is denied Semira,
 Haste, pour the balm of comfort on his sorrows;
 Bid him rely upon my spotless truth,
 And bear his fortune as becomes Arsaces.

PANTHEA.

Doubt not his virtues firmly will support him,
 And o'er his bosom shed that sweet contentment,
 Which ne'er shall bless the tyrant's guilty couch.
 What, though his temper be vindictive, cruel,
 He will not dare in secret, uncondemned,
 To doom to death the idol of his people?

SEMIRA.

Not dare? Thou know'st not his inhuman spirit;
 His hideous crimes have steel'd his soul to mercy.
 But, by the woes that pierce my heart, I swear,
 Should he presume to touch his life, this hand
 Shall antedate the justice of the gods,

And

And hurl him down, associate meet for demons,
To Arimanius a devoted victim. *[Exeunt.]*

SCENE V. *A Chamber in the Palace.*

Enter PHARASMANES hastily.

PHARASMANES.

Hell, and perdition ! proud, imperious caitiff !
Who waits there ? Fly—call Mirvan to our presence.
Not that I meant to keep the plighted promise,
By Ariana wrested from my lips :
But had he own'd his infamous attempt,
Confession would have sanctified repentment,
And made all Persia partners in my vengeance.
But this contempt, this insolent denial,
Adds tenfold fuel to my ling'ring fury,
And seals th' assassin's doom.

Enter M I R V A N .

M I R V A N .

Dread Sir, your pleasure.

PHARASMANES.

Regard me well, and mark my orders, Mirvan.
Haste to the prison with a faithful guard—
You know my meaning, without farther preface,
Let me be told within an hour he lives not,
Or your own head shall answer the neglect.

M I R V A N .

I shall obey you. Yet, my lord, I fear—

PHARASMANES.

Hence with your fears, and execute my orders,
Nor doubt your recompense.

MIRVAN.

MIRVAN.

I fly to serve you. [*Ex. Mir.*]

PHARASMANES.

Now, haughty ruffian ! shalt thou meet thy ruin.
Semira too, the traitress ! could I tear her
From this fond breast, where still she reigns resistless.
But that exceeds my utmost stretch of pow'r.
Mine then she shall be, I will yet possess her.
My heart no longer shall be torn by rage,
And hopeless passion. No, I will avenge
My slighted majesty, at once on both,
And shew the world my will shall be obey'd. [*Exit.*]

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

A C T V. S C E N E I.

*The GARDENS of the PALACE.**Enter SEMIRA.*

S E M I R A.

WHERE shall I find this unrelenting father,
Who shuns my views, compelling me to seek him
In these abodes, polluted by the tyrant,
And brave again this Pharasmanes' presence,
Whose very person to my sight is baleful?
In vain my steps have trac'd the garden round,
In hope to meet him : Nor Panthea comes.
Alas ! my lord Arsaces will be murder'd,
E'er I can clasp his venerable knees,
Can with my tears, my agonizing groans,
Awake remorse, and win him to retract
His cruel inhumanity of purpose,
Or join Semira to her slaughter'd lover.
These dreadful portents terrify my soul,
And freeze my blood. But yesternight, 'tis said,
As Mithra's sister, her accustom'd path
Trac'd o'er yon azure vault, some hand unseen,
A flaming dagger, through the dusky air,
Hurl'd at her silver disk. With sanguine red,
Her virgin orb discolour'd in an instant,
Look'd lurid, and malignant. In the sky,

Em-

Embattled armies front to front oppos'd,
 Clash'd their terrific banners. Shrouded ghosts,
 In mournful discord, pierc'd the night's dull ear
 With frequent yellings. Vengeance is abroad,
 And desolation canopies us round.
 Oh! should the innocent and guilty fall,
 In undistinguish'd ruin. Should Arfaces—
 My heart dies in me—Ha! behold Panthea,
 Grief in her looks, her eyes enflam'd with tears.

Enter P A N T H E A.

What horrid tale hast thou to utter? Speak,
 I'll hear it, though it kill me. Is he murder'd?
 Tell me immediate, hold me not in doubt—

P A N T H E A.

This agitation, these convulsive starts,
 This gasping eagerness, affright my soul,
 And make me shudder to unfold a deed,
 All Susa hears, and hears with execration.
 The brave Arfaces—how shall I disclose
 The fatal tale, which universal fame
 Forbids to be conceal'd—the brave Arfaces,
 Lies pale, and breathless, murder'd in his prison.

S E M I R A.

Then ye have launch'd the fiercest of your terrors,
 Remorseless gods! and vengeance is exhausted.
 Not your own pow'r can save me now from ruin.
 Come then, Despair, with all thy train of horrors,
 Thou fearful inmate of distracted mortals;
 Come, let me clasp thee to my full-swoln heart,
 And prove a mirror to all future wretches.

P A N T H E A.

PANTHEA.

Oh! dearest madam, do not look so wildly:
 Misfortunes are the heritage of mortals:
 The vulgar float the sport, and prey of passion;
 While noble minds triumphant soar above it,
 And pay their homage at the shrine of reason.

SEMIRA.

Away with reason, preach it to the winds,
 Or the hoarse murmurs of the rolling billows;
 Not subterranean fires, which cleave the earth,
 Can match the flames, th' insufferable torments,
 Which tear, which harrow, which convulse my soul,
 And lash me into madness! Heav'nly host!

(Dropping suddenly on her knees.

But wherefore pray—What, what can pray'rs procure,
 For one like me, beyond redemption curst?
 Look, how yon villain, with malignant joy,

(Starting up again.

Smiles, to behold the blood upon his dagger.
 Arrest the Slave, invent new torments for him;
 Tear him to peice-meal, cast him to the winds,
 Or throw his limbs to parch upon the rocks,
 A prey to vultures, and devouring tigers.
 Burst, burst, and ease me, thou tormented heart!
 I cannot bear this agonizing conflict.

(She leans on Panthea.

Enter PHARASMANES attended.

MITHRINES and MIRVAN.

PHARASMANES.

(Speaking as they enter.

Enough, good Mirvan, haste thee, and conceal
 The lifeless corse, from every prying eye. *[Exit. Mir.*

K

Yes

Yes to the last, the Slave defied my pow'r, *(to Mithrines.*
Refusing still confession of his treason.

S E M I R A.

Thou bloody Tyrant! whose atrocious deeds
E'en Arimanius, and his host of demons,
Would view with horror: could not all his laurels,
His unexampled, marvellous achievements,
For Persia brav'd, inspire thee with compassion?
Inhuman savage! Vengeance! vengeance! Sir,
(sinking down at his feet.

Are you my father? Can you hear my groans,
And see my piercing agonies unmov'd?
But whither am I hurried? Oh! Semira!
Thou hast no father—no protector left thee—
Thou then, Oh, Earth! receive a wretched woman,
Be more relenting than a parent's heart,
And hide me in thy bosom, from a fire;
Who scruples not to quench his thirst remorseless,
In guiltless blood, fresh streaming from the veins
Of injur'd friends, and miserable children.

M I T H R I N E S.

Heart-piercing fight! By Heav'n it quite unmans me.

(aside.

Give the first transports of her griefs their course,
And let the tempest—

Enter ARIANA hastily.

A R I A N A.

Fortunate discovery!

The gods are just. Almighty Orosmales
Still guards the cause of innocence, and virtue.

P H A R A S M A N E S.

What new event—

A R I A N A.

A R I A N A.

Arfaces still is faithful.

At length Tigranes has disclos'd the secret.
I found the Slave conceal'd within my chamber ;
His falt'ring lips declar'd the hero guiltless.
Yet, e'er he died, repentant, he confess'd
A wretch most honor'd with his sovereign's love,
Employ'd his arm to strike the fatal blow :
But all his efforts could not speak his name,
With his last sigh it dy'd upon his lips,
And at my feet a breathless corse he lay.

S E M I R A, (*starting up.*)

Inhuman fiend ! than fiends more unrelenting,
Who thron'd in darkness, sit'st, like Arimanius,
Incessant plotting to involve mankind
In misery, and ruin. Now what reason
Canst thou invent, thy cruelty to varnish ?
Transfix him instant, righteous Orosmales !
Or on his head rain down a host of plagues,
Then send him banning through the shudd'ring world,
An everlasting monument of vengeance.

A R I A N A.

What mean these transports ? My presaging heart !
Ha ! say, Semira ! is Arfaces dead ?

S E M I R A.

He is, he is. Fly, Princess, trust no more
Your brother's flinty heart, more fierce, more savage,
Than tigers bred upon Imaus' summits.
His cruel soul, to every feeling lost
Of sympathetic nature, knows no joy,
But in the pangs, and dying groans of wretches,
Unpitied doom'd in torments to expire.

A R I A N A.

Hast thou deceiv'd me? faithless Pharasmanes!
Are these thy oaths? Is this the plighted promise—

P H A R A S M A N E S.

Hence, Ariana, tell me not of vows;
The fate he found his arrogance deserv'd.
My throne is hedg'd with thorns. The spotted traitor
Lies still conceal'd; but yet I will dislodge him,
Or streams of gore shall deluge Susa's streets.

A R I A N A.

Your fury blinds you, or a moment's thought
Must drag th' offender into open day.
Reflect, reflect, whom most you have affronted.
Mithrines' consort—

P H A R A S M A N E S

Whither would'st thou lead me?

M I T H R I N E S, (*aside.*)

Now I am lost. Farewel all hopes of vengeance.

A R I A N A.

Tigranes' words too manifest declare
Whose rancor plann'd the deed. Inhuman brother!
But Orosmades will avenge Arfaces,
And make you feel the sharp envenom'd pangs,
Whose deadly scorpions sting my tortur'd heart. [*Exit.*]

P H A R A S M A N E S.

By Heav'n 'tis plain. Swift darting through my mind,
Proofs rise on proofs, each blacker than the former.
Thou foul betrayer! smiling, hollow villain!
Was this thy truth, thy fealty so boasted?
But, by the gods, in yon bright sphere enthron'd,
Thy guilty life shall instant pay the forfeit
Of treachery so execrable. Guards—

M I T H R I N E S.

M I T H R I N E S.

Shall then my fame, which hitherto has brav'd
Th' invenom'd tooth of slander, be traduc'd?
Be branded by Tigranes? Such injustice—

P H A R A S M A N E S.

Injustice! no, I see your double heart.
'Tis the foul nest where treasons are engender'd.
Hear me, thou slave, or prove thee instant guiltless,
Or, by the deity who feasts on blood,
Traitor! my rage shall tear thee limb from limb.

S E M I R A.

And must I lose my parent with my lover?
Ye guardian spirits, who attend our steps,
And look on filial piety approving,
Assist the guiltless fraud!—(*aside.*)—Fell monster, hear!
Afresh, barbarian, would'st thou spill the blood
Of innocence? If slaughter must appease
Thy iron heart, here point its direct shafts.
'Twas I engag'd Tigranes to assault you.
To me, mysterious, do his words allude.
Semira 'tis who shares—Detested passion!
Oh! inauspicious fortune? had'st thou smil'd
Indulgent to my wish, this vengeful arm,
E'er now, had hurl'd him with apostate spirits
To howl in pangs; avenging, at a blow,
Aspasia, and Arsaces.

P H A R A S M A N E S.

Shame! confusion!
Is this the heart apparently so gentle?
Can that fair form—

M I T H R I N E S.

No, hear me Pharasmanes;
By yon bright god, Semira is not guilty.

Her

Her tender bosom—No, excess alone
 Of filial fondness, from her lips has wrung
 This false confession, to preserve her parent.
 Pity a father! save, oh! save my child,
 Or slay Mithrines. Should I see her fall,
 The woes my heart, distracted, must endure,
 Will instant sting my tortur'd brain to madness,
 And make me act some deed of desperation.

PHARASMANES.

Mithrines, no. Ungrateful as I find her,
 Still let her live. Or innocent, or guilty,
 To Pharasmanes is she yet so dear,
 He cannot see the unrelenting sword,
 Distain with blood that alabaster bosom.
 Oh! bane of empire! Happy thrice the peasant,
 Who, shelter'd in a cottage, never felt
 The boist'rous surges of ambition's ocean.
 On what a sea of stormy doubts, and fears,
 My weary bark is tost. But Heav'n shall end them.
 Haste, bid the Magi meet me at the temple;
 Invoke the gods to pardon my offence,
 And guide me through this wilderness of doubts.

[Exit attended.]

MITHRINES.

Thou execrable monster! dar'st thou hope
 The gods will bend propitious to thy pray'r?
 'Tis blasphemy to think it. No, this mockery,
 Will but accelerate the pond'rous ruin,
 Prepar'd to crush thy guilt-devoted head.
 Already Susa flames with discontent,
 And I will haste to fan the conflagration.
 My child, Semira, my heroic daughter,
 Oh! let me press thee to my throbbing heart!

Tura

Turn thee not from me, with such piercing looks.
It is a father fondly longs to clasp thee—

S E M I R A.

Said'st thou a father? Fathers should have hearts,
While thou, remorseless—Ha! defend me, Heav'n!
See, see, where pendant in the ambient air,
Aspasia's shade bends frowning o'er our heads:
A bloody poignard in her hand she grasps,
She points it at my breast. To fleeting ether
Again she vanishes—I know thy meaning,
Prophetic spirit! and obey thy mandate.
Now, ruthless parent, now complete your vengeance,
And join Semira to your murder'd friend.
It shall be secret, none shall know who did it.

M I T H R I N E S.

By Heav'n, her agonies divide my heart.
My blood boils up in tumults to my brain.
I am entangled in the web I wove.
But hence with words, let deeds proclaim my meaning.
Tyrant! I come, and Susa, rous'd to arms,
Shall second my revenge. The sword of justice,
Unsheath'd, descends in curling wreaths of flame,
To sweep thee headlong from the groaning earth,
As torrents roll obstructing mounds before them. [*Exit.*]

S E M I R A.

Swift as the blazing thunderbolt of Heav'n,
Which instant rives the cloud-capt hill asunder,
Down let it dart, and crush him into atoms.
Avenging spirits! from your ebon seats,
Arise in troops, by Arimanius mission'd,
Around his couch in frantic measures dance,
And seize your destin'd victim. Then, while deep
Ye plunge him down in liquid lakes of sulphur,

With

With shouts discordant clap your raven plumes,
 And double every anguish he endures,
 By howling dreadful in his tortur'd ears
 His hideous scroll of unrepented murders. [Exit.

SCENE II. *An open Square.*

*Enter MITHRINES, followed by a Crowd
 of Persians.*

MITHRINES.

Mourn, mourn, brave Persians, your impending fate.
 The dread of Ofrōa, your mountain oak,
 Whose ample shade secur'd imperial Susa,
 Your hero, is no more; by Pharasmanes,
 With infamous ingratitude, destroy'd;
 Destroy'd by him whose throne his valour fix'd.
 The jealous Tyrant sicken'd at the praise,
 Which, from the summit of her airy temple,
 Fame's golden trump, in everlasting notes,
 Through yon resplendent canopy resounded,
 To strike a list'ning world.

Enter MIRVAN hastily.

MIRVAN.

Well met, Mithrines.

Throughout the city, with unwearied steps,
 I long have sought you, to unfold a tale
 Will fill your soul with joy. Arfaces lives:
 By me protected, and by me conceal'd.
 He now breathes vengeance 'gainst this Pharasmanes.

MITHRINES.

His life preserv'd! Astonishment, and transport!
 What guardian god suggested to your soul—

MIRVAN.

MIRVAN.

Enquire not now when every moment's precious.
 He waits but you, to join the brave atchievement,
 And help to drag the miscreant from his throne.
 Already have the tidings of his death,
 Through Susa, spread disorder, and confusion :
 In ardent throngs the populace assemble,
 Like the hoarse sound, which indicates the storm,
 From man, to man, the disapproving murmurs,
 Augmented roll, and stimulate their fury.

MITHRINES.

Hear, Persians, hear, your god-like hero lives !
 His life, by Heav'n and Mirvan sav'd, to you
 He dedicates ! Oh ! vindicate his fame,
 Nor let the laurels that adorn his brow,
 By Pharasmanes in the dust be trampled.

A L L.

Produce Arsaces, he shall be our leader.

MITHRINES.

Haste thee, good Mirvan, bring him to their view,
 Now while their wrath is rising to its height,
 And boiling in their veins. *(Exit Mirvan.)*

At length, thou Tyrant,

My toils surround thee ; yes, the time is come,
 That one of us shall fall. Immortal Mithra !
 Give me but once to view that glorious hour,
 And take the remnant of my future days.

Enter MIRVAN, ARSACES, and Soldiers.

A L L.

Long live Arsaces, our protecting Champion !

A R S A C E S.

Thanks, generous Persians ! Oh ! my friend, Mithrines,
 Would I had fall'n amid that glorious field,

†

Where

Where nations clash'd with nations, and the groans
 Of dying thousands pierc'd Heav'n's vaulted dome,
 E'er thus reduc'd to seek redress by means,
 Which dire necessity alone can justify.
 Nought but these proofs of tyranny redoubled,
 Should e'er have won me to unsheath my sabre.
 Ev'n now I wield it but to guard my life,
 My love inviolate. Those once secur'd,
 I wish no farther— (Alarm.

M I T H R I N E S.

Hark! Th' alarm is giv'n.
 Fierce shouts of war re-echo through the city.

A R S A C E S.

All then who love their country, and their freedom,
 Unsheath their sabres, and in order'd ranks,
 United join the banner of Arsaces.
 (They unsheath their swords.
 But, in this scene of tumult, I conjure you,
 Stain not the justice of your cause, with crimes,
 And foul misdeeds. Act worthy of yourselves,
 Nor lose remembrance that you combat solely,
 For liberty and Persia. (Exeunt.

S C E N E III.

The Inside of a magnificent Temple of the Sun.
Alarm and Combat.

Enter PHARASMANES, from the inner Part,
his Sword drawn.

P H A R A S M A N E S.

Whence this din?
 This hideous uproar, like the peal of Heav'n?
 Some

Some new conspiracy—but let it come.
 As fits a sovereign will I meet these Traitors,
 And with the eye of majesty incens'd,
 Astonish'd smite them: Or if Orosmades
 Ordain this hour my last, intrepid fall,
 As monarchs should, my falchion in my hand. (*Going.*)

Enter MITHRINES.

MITHRINES.

Tyrant, 'tis well. At last thou art o'ertaken.
 Th' impartial sword of justice is uplifted—

PHARASMANES.

From thee, the sword of justice?

MITHRINES.

Yes, from me.

I would not now drag on a weary being,
 But that I hop'd the glorious day to see,
 When, on your head, my sabre should repay,
 The deadly wrongs you offer'd to Aspasia.
 For this I mask'd me in the veil of friendship,
 While enmity lay rankling at my heart.
 'Twas I, 'twas I, who urg'd the Siave Tigranes,
 To strike his dagger to your impious heart:
 'Twas I who dropt that paper in your chamber,
 Wherein the brave Arsaces was accus'd—

PHARASMANES.

I'll hear no more—abominable Traitor!
 Infernal homicide—my sabre's point
 Shall instant write my answer on thy heart.

MITHRINES.

Now Orosmades animate my arm,
 To lay this monster prostrate at my feet,
 And with Mithrines work your sovereign pleasure.

(*They fight; both are wounded and fall.*)

PHARAS-

PHARASMANES.

Curse on my fortune! am I doom'd to sink
 Beneath a villain? Infamous assassin!
 But thou too fall'st—that comfort smooths the pangs
 Of potent death—I feel him share my heart-strings—
 They strain—they burst—all—all is darkness round me.

[dies.]

MITHRINES.

At length I triumph, now I am aveng'd,
 Descend, Aspasia, from yon realms of light,
 And view your spoiler weltring on the earth,
 Then take me dying to your lov'd embrace.
 Dear shade, I come, contented, since my arm
 Thy wrongs has cancell'd, I resign my life,
 And bid the world adieu—The hand of death
 Lies cold upon my breast—we now shall meet,
 To part no more—I come—receive my spirit—

[dies.]

*Enter SEMIRA, a Poignard in her Hand,
 her Hair dishevell'd, and Robes disorder'd.*

SEMIRA.

What means this wild confusion, this mad uproar,
 Which rages throughout the city. Shouts of men,
 And shrieks of women, mix with clash of arms.
 'Tis all one desolation. Nature seems
 To groan her last, and chaos to resume
 His ancient empire. Let the world expire,
 And ruin drive her chariot o'er creation.
 It suits a wretch like me. This sacred fane
 Shall henceforth be my mansion: This good dagger
 Shall soon release my spirit from its clay,
 And mission me—

*(Seeing Mithrines' body she stands agast,
 Where*

Where am I? do I tread
 My native soil? are these thy holy shrines?
 Is this your mercy, gods? Poor bleeding corse!
 Tho' thou wert cruel, thou wert still my father.
 Burst, pond'rous fabric, burst upon my head!

(Falling down by his corse.)

O'erwhelm me, bury, hide me from myself.
 Ha! see where pale, and cover'd o'er with wounds,
 Before me stalks his venerable shade!
 Arsaces too, with ghastly glaring eye-balls!
 Behold, they beckon me. I come, I come,
 Willing I cast this hated being from me,
 And bid the wretched world farewell for ever.

(She stabs herself.)

*Enter ARSACES, MIRVAN, &c. with
 Soldiers.*

ARSACES.

Justice has triumph'd: Conquest crowns our sabres.
 Then to the gods submissive, on their altars,
 Be paid our grateful incense.

(seeing the bodies.)

Death, and horror!

What hoarded curse is yet in store to blast me?
 Mithrines! Pharasmanes! Oh! Semira!
 My love, my better life; Semira! speak to me.

SEMIRA, *(looking up.)*

Who calls the wretch who wears Semira's name?
 Art thou the spirit of my murder'd lord,
 Again return'd to bear me to the shades—
 Nay do not mock me—Grief has dimm'd my sight—
 Or I should think it were my lord Arsaces,
 Whose death I mourn.

ARSACES.

A R S A C E S.

It is, it is, Semira.

Arise, my love, it is thy fond Arfaces.

S E M I R A.

Have ye then sav'd him, tutelary pow'rs ?
 Preserv'd him from the Tyrant ? Joy, unlook'd for,
 Will gild my dying moments. Oh ! Arfaces,
 Wilt thou forgive me ? I have been too rash.
 A father bleeding, and a lover murder'd,
 Were woes too mighty for my feeble spirit,
 Torn by the conflict of contending passions,
 I sheath'd that poignard—

A R S A C E S.

Inauspicious hour !

And must I lose thee when my heart beats high,
 And thrills with tenderness ? Oh ! insupportable !
 No, I will fence thee from the grasp of death,
 And hide thee safe within my folding arms.
(throwing himself down by her,

S E M I R A.

It will not be. My life ebbs out apace,
 And cold damp dews surround my lab'ring heart.
 Save me—I faint—

A R S A C E S.

Fly, search some healing balm,
 Of sovereign pow'r to stay her fleeting spirit,
 And raise a soul from death. Oh ! cruel anguish !
 What are all sorrows match'd with such affliction ?
 Who never lov'd, ne'er knew th' extremes of woe.

S E M I R A.

Sustain—support me—Pow'rful death invades
 My shiv'ring breast. All now will soon be past.
 Thou dear possessor of Semira's heart !

Whom

Whom she has lov'd with constancy unalter'd,
 Oh ! cherish my remembrance in your bosom,
 Nor let despair uplift your frantic heart,
 In mad attempts against your noble life.
 The light forsakes my eyes—Farewel, Arsaces—
 In these lov'd arms I meet my fate contented—
 Give me thy hand—my heart is cold, and frozen—
 So—gently bend me—Oh ! farewell, for ever. [*dies.*]

A R S A C E S.

Ethereal host ! descend. Ye winged spirits !
 Descend, in pity to a lover's woes,
 And from the grave this excellence redeem.
 Alas, she dies ; I see the mantling blood
 Steal from her pallid cheek. My love, Semira !
 Oh ! pity my distraction ! ope thine eyes,
 And on Arsaces once more cast their lustre.
 She hears me not, her soul has wing'd its flight.
 Stay then, one moment, thou celestial spirit !
 Together, mounting, we will tread together
 Yon lucid spheres.

(*attempting to stab himself with the poignard.*)

M I R V A N.

(*wresting the dagger.*)

Forbear, my lord, forbear.
 With patience arm you. Will you then forget
 The dear petition your Semira, dying,
 So earnestly requested ?

A R S A C E S.

Hence ! avaunt !
 Think ye to force the cruel load of life—
 No, hence, and leave me. This is my abode ;
 Here will I fix my everlasting rest,
 And cling for ever to this pallid corse.

MIRVAN.

M I R V A N.

Soul-harrowing fight! His griefs have burst his heart.
See how he sits, insensible, and stunn'd.

A R S A C E S.

Give me some dagger, some swift means of death.
I will not bear these agonies that wring me.
What villain's that? By Heav'n it is the Tyrant.
See how he tears Semira from my arms.
Restore her to me—Murder—Force her from him—
Unhand her, miscreant—Grind not thus my heart.

(fwoons on the body.

M I R V A N.

Mysterious are the ways, great Orosmales!
Thy wisdom works. To thy all-wise decrees,
We bow submissive, and adore, in silence,
That dreadful justice, which, tho' long deferr'd,
Has burst, at length, in tenfold fury on us,
And made them both thy instruments of vengeance.
Yet we lament these miserable lovers,
Lost, and absorb'd, amid the general ruin.
But there's an After-being, there we look
For that reward which crowns the heirs of virtue.
From this example, let offending mortals
Attentive learn, that Heav'n's all-seeing eye,
Esteems revenge a crime of no less guilt,
Than that, its rage with restless hate pursues.



F I N I S.

